

# THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

FRANK T. BULLEN

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*The Cruise of the 'Cachalot'*  
*First published, 1898*



## FRANK THOMAS BULLEN

FRANK THOMAS BULLEN was born of very poor, working class parents on April 5th 1857 in the (then) suburban district of Paddington, London. When he was but eighteen months old his home was broken up and he and his elder sister—who, it appears, died soon afterwards—were consigned to the care of a maiden aunt who kept a small dressmaking establishment. The aunt's house was situated in a small terrace directly overlooking the railway line near Paddington Station and young Frank Thomas used to spend hours every day watching the trains go by and staring with wonderment at the picturesque engines of the Great Western.

He received some elementary schooling—the only formal education he was ever to have—at a small private school kept by three ladies and it appears that he was able to read with great fluency at the age of four.

When he was nine years old his aunt died, and from the sheltered existence of her home he found himself, almost overnight, flung into the streets of London.

For about two years he was an errand boy and 'street arab'. Then, in 1869—exchanging one miserable form of existence for another—he enlisted as a cabin boy on a sailing vessel bound for the West Indies. For the next fifteen years he sailed the seven seas, working his way up slowly to the position of second mate and finally chief mate. His voyages and adventures form the subject matter of all his writings.

In 1883 he abandoned sea life and became a junior clerk at the Meteorological Office, at a salary of two pounds a week, on which he had to support a wife (he had married in 1878) and bring up a family.

Around 1897 he began to give occasional lectures on his experiences at sea, and in 1898 he published his first book *The Cruise of the 'Cachalot'* which instantly established his position as a writer. It was the great, momentous change in his fortunes.

In 1899 he resigned his clerkship and joined the staff of the *Morning Leader*, a position which enabled him to devote most of his time and energy to lecturing and writing. From 1899 onwards he contributed a great number of sketches and articles to various journals and published some thirty books in quick succession. His lecture tours took him to the Continent, to America, Canada and Australia, and as a guest of one of the big steamship companies he visited the West Indies and Latin America.

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During the last period of his life he acquired both fame and wealth, but they had come almost too late to give him much joy, because as he said in his recollections, 'The iron of poverty and struggle, of scorn and failure, had entered my very soul'.

During the last years of his life he made his home at Bournemouth. He died at Madeira on February 26th 1915. His wife and three daughters survived him.

H. d. R.

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## INTRODUCTION

IN the latter half of the last century large numbers of men were employed in the British and American whaling fleets any one of whom had doubtless all the material required for a book. But those were the days when sailing was tough and a crew was picked up from the gutters of the ports and licked into shape by officers who knew how to drive. This was particularly true of the whalers, for only a drunk or a man grown desperate would willingly ship for a cruise lasting two, maybe three years. Illiteracy was high and acceptance of even the most fantastic phenomena of the sea without question or interest almost universal even among the officers. What records we have of these voyages were largely written by surgeons whose interest was mainly scientific. But in *The Cruise of the 'Cachalot'* we have an account straight from the fo'c'sle. That in itself is astonishing enough. What is even more astonishing, however, is that the man who wrote it was no educated adventurer who ran away to sea, but a street arab cum sea urchin who had every right to be in the fo'c'sle. And yet this book has become a classic of the sea. It was first published in 1898 and whilst still in the press Kipling was moved enough to write a personal letter to this unknown author which began: 'It is immense—there is no other word.'

The success of the book is very much a personal triumph for the author. Frank Bullen was eighteen when he shipped aboard the *Cachalot*. He was over forty when he wrote *The Cruise of the 'Cachalot.'* For more than twenty years the material lay dormant in his mind, locked there by his inability to express himself adequately. This he had to learn through journalism, slowly and laboriously, until, encouraged by St. Loe Strachey, editor of the *Spectator*, he at last felt competent to embark on a full record of his experiences. I am appalled to think what it must have cost him in mental exertion and concentration. For consider his life story.

He was born in mean circumstances in Paddington, the son of a drunken, quarrelling working man. The date was 1857. An aunt took him in, together with his elder sister, and she supported them and several of her own children by dressmaking. Apparently she gave him some schooling, for he had learned to read before he received his only organised education, a few years at a dame school. When he was nine his aunt died. He was on his own then, and life and the need to earn his own living henceforth provided his only education. For three years he lived on the streets earning a few

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coppers as a grand boy, a ragged, underfed starveling, existing as best he could. Finally, in desperation, he shook the dust of Dickens' London from his feet: 'I belonged to the ignoble company of the unwanted. In spite of hard usage, scanty food and overwork, I ridiculously persisted in living, until, at the approach of my twelfth year, an eligible opening presented itself for me to go to sea.' The 'eligible opening' was as cabin-boy aboard his uncle's ship, the *Arabella*. This vessel was so badly found that it was rumoured amongst the crew that she was not intended to return. This may have been the case, for on the coast of Mexico his uncle had him transferred to the barque *Discoverer* for safety, the only kindness he ever showed the boy. From that moment this scrap of cockney London became an urchin of the sea, wandering from ship to ship through shipwreck, mutiny, starvation, yellow fever and shipwreck again. The *Discoverer* was skippered by a drunkard and ran on to a coral reef whilst all hands, including the captain, were asleep! After that practically every ship he sailed in seemed to be queer.

Much of this period of his life is covered by his third book, *The Log of a Sea-Waif*. It does not rank with *Two Years before the Mast*, but it is nevertheless a pretty violent condemnation of conditions at sea in the 1860s, particularly as regards the employment of boys of his age and the treatment they were accorded. He can hardly have been happy during this period, the instances of wanton cruelty or inhuman lack of consideration for his age are too numerous. And yet he managed to get some fun out of life. And though a lonely and rather pathetic figure, he has his moments of adolescent swagger and somehow manages to emerge from it very much a man.

As early as this he is showing a marked interest in reading and when treated by a kindly captain to two weeks' board and lodging at the Sailors' Home in Liverpool he goes to ground in the library, starting on a volume of Captain Cook's Voyages, and ceases to have any interest in searching for a ship until the state of his finances forces him once again into the Shipmaster's hands. His character, too, is gradually emerging. This may be coloured by the fact that he is writing of his sea wanderings in middle life, but if we are to believe his own evidence he is already, at the age of thirteen or fourteen, reacting strongly from the memory of his father's drunkenness and evincing the beginnings of that marked religious streak that colours most of his later work.

Altogether Bullen was fifteen years at sea, serving in almost every capacity except that of master. Finally, at the age of twenty-seven, he got a shore job as a junior clerk in the Meteorological Office. He was not happy in this and turned to writing as a means

of escape. He became first a contributor to the *Morning Ledger* at two pounds a week and finally, when royalties began to come in, was able to move into the country with his wife and three daughters. In the seventeen years following the publication of *The Cruise of the 'Cachalot'* he produced a total of thirty-six books, supplementing his income by giving lectures all over the country. He died at Madeira on February 26, 1915.

I have given the story of his early life in some detail because few writers have made such full use of their adolescent experiences as Bullen and, indeed, few have packed so much into this period of their lives. Kipling, at the end of his letter and referring to Bullen's two years on the whaling grounds, said: 'You have thrown away material enough to make five books, and I congratulate you heartily.' Reading Bullen's later work one is inclined to wish he had taken the hint, for he turned to fiction and in this field he was out of his depth. But in recording what he had actually observed and felt his writing has a simplicity and honesty that is often quite beautiful and at his best his descriptions of scenes and action and natural phenomena are incredibly vivid, achieved with an economy of words that suggests the influence of Stevenson. I can never think of the sperm whale without calling to mind the picture of one locked in deadly battle with a giant squid—a momentary glimpse in bright tropical moonlight seen through the eager eyes of a kid of nineteen. Nor can I enter a sea-filled cavern without being reminded of that boatload of men sealed by the tide in the black darkness of a cave with a mortally wounded whale for company, a whale that leapt clean out of the water like a salmon in its death agony and whose huge carcass provided a feast for voracious, phosphorescent sharks throughout a whole ghastly night. The scene where the nigger mate carries the detested Captain Slocum to a watery grave is as vivid as the last sight of Israel Hands in *Treasure Island*.

Bullen not only uses his descriptive powers on the more colourful aspects of whaling, when the boats are breaking up under the attacks of a maddened cachalot or he himself has climbed on to the carcass of a whale only to find the huge cetacean on the point of going into its death flurry; he uses it to bring to life the people and places he visits and all the astonishing things that are there in the oceans for those who have eyes to see them. And his eyes are ever the eyes of the London street arab, sharp, inquisitive and reasoning. That this is a great book there is no question. But I will go further and say that never again will a book like this be written about whales and whaling.

It is not only that the methods have changed. The opportunity has gone. Whaling is now a highly mechanised industry confined

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largely to the Antarctic. Never again will men cruise the ocean byways, from the Sea of Okhotsk to the Solander Grounds, pitting skill and courage against the largest living creature in hand-to-hand combat in its own element. For this reason alone there can be no new *Cruise of the 'Cachalot,'* no second *Moby Dick*. And because of this remarkably little has been added to our knowledge of the whale in the last fifty years. Bullen's theories about the feeding habits of the sperm and the origins of ambergris still hold good today. So, too, do his descriptions of the very human behaviour of a cow whale, submitting willingly to death rather than risk injury to her calf. Whales and their habits do not change quickly. A century is but a moment in the evolution of marine life.

And so *The Cruise of the 'Cachalot'* is as fresh today as when it was written and we must be eternally grateful to Frank Bullen for struggling so heroically to master the means of passing on to us the wonders he had seen.

HAMMOND INNES



THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'  
ROUND THE WORLD AFTER SPERM WHALES



*Letter received by the Author from Mr. RUDYARD KIPLING, as the book was passing through the Press.*

DEAR MR. BOLLEN,—

It is immense—there is no other word. I've never read anything that equals it in its deep-sea wonder and mystery; nor do I think that any book before has so completely covered the whole business of whale-fishing, and at the same time given such real and new sea pictures. You have thrown away material enough to make five books, and I congratulate you most heartily. It's a new world that you've opened the door to.

Very sincerely,

RUDYARD KIPLING

*Rottingdean*



## PREFACE

IN the following pages an attempt has been made—it is believed for the first time—to give an account of the cruise of a South Sea whaler from the seaman's standpoint. Two very useful books\* have been published—both of them over half a century ago—on the same subject; but, being written by the surgeons of whaleships for scientific purposes, neither of them was interesting to the general reader. They have both been long out of print; but their value to the student of natural history has been, and still is, very great, Dr. Beale's book, in particular, being still *the* authority on the sperm whale.

This book does not pretend to compete with either of the above valuable works. Its aims is to present to the general reader a simple account of the methods employed, and the dangers met with, in a calling about which the great mass of the public knows absolutely nothing. Pending the advent of some great writer who shall see the wonderful possibilities for literature contained in the world-wide wanderings of the South Sea whale-fishers, the author has endeavoured to summarize his experiences so that they may be read without weariness, and, it is hoped, with profit.

The manifold shortcomings of the work will not, it is trusted, be laid to the account of the subject, than which none more interesting could well be imagined, but to the limitations of the writer, whose long experience of sea life has done little to foster the literary faculty.

One claim may be made with perfect confidence—that if the manner be not all that could be wished, the matter is entirely trustworthy, being compiled from actual observation and experience, and in no case at second-hand. An endeavour has also been made to exclude such matter as is easily obtainable elsewhere—matters of common knowledge and 'padding' of any sort—the object not being simply the making of a book, but the record of little-known facts.

Great care has been taken to use no names either of ships or persons, which could, by being identified, give annoyance or pain to any one, as in many cases strong language has been necessary for the expression of opinions.

Finally, the author hopes that, although in no sense exclusively

\* *Narrative of a Whaling Voyage round the Globe*, by F. Debell Bennett, F.R.C.S. (2 vols.). Bentley, London (1840). *The Sperm Whale Fishery*, by Thomas Beale, M.R.C.S. London (1835).

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a book for boys, the coming generation may find this volume readable and interesting; and with that desire he offers it confidently, though in all humility, to that great impartial jury, the public.

*Dulwich, July, 1897.*

F. T. B.

*Outward Bound*

AT the age of eighteen, after a sea-experience of six years from the time when I dodged about London streets, a ragged Arab, with wits sharpened by the constant fight for food, I found myself roaming the streets of New Bedford, Massachusetts. Now I came to be there, of all places in the world, does not concern this story at all, so I am not going to trouble my readers with it; enough to say that I *was* there, and mighty anxious to get away. Sailor Jack is always hankering for shore when he is at sea, but when he is 'outward bound'—that is, when his money is all gone—he is like a cat in the rain there.

So as *my* money was all gone, I was hungry for a ship; and when a long, keen-looking man with a goat-like beard, and mouth stained with dry tobacco-juice, hailed me one afternoon at the street-corner, I answered very promptly, scenting a berth. 'Lookin' fer a ship, stranger?' said he. 'Yes; do you want a hand?' said I, anxiously. He made a funny little sound something like a pony's whinny, then answered, 'Wall, I should surmise that I want between fifty and sixty hands, ef yew kin lay me onto 'em; but, kem along, every dreep's a drop, an' yew seem likely enough.' With that he turned and led the way until we reached a building, around which were gathered one of the most nondescript crowds I had ever seen. There certainly did not appear to be a sailor among them. Not so much by their rig, though that is not a great deal to go by, but by their actions and speech. One thing they all had in common, tobacco chewing; but as nearly every male I met with in America did that, it was not much to be noticed. I had hardly done reckoning them up when two or three bustling men came out and shepherded us all energetically into a long, low room, where some form of agreement was read out to us. Sailors are naturally and usually careless about the nature of the 'articles' they sign, their chief anxiety being to get to sea, and under somebody's charge. But had I been ever so anxious to know what I was going to sign this time, I could not, for the language might as well have been Chinese for all I understood of it. However, I signed and passed on, engaged to go I knew not where, in some ship I did not know even the name of, in which I was to receive I did not know how much, or how little, for my labour, nor how long I was going to be away. 'What a young fool!' I hear somebody say. I quite agree, but there were a good many more in that ship, as in most ships that I have ever sailed in.

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From the time we signed the articles, we were never left to ourselves. Truculent-looking men accompanied us to our several boarding-houses, paid our debts for us, finally bringing us by boat to a ship lying out in the bay. As we passed under her stern, I read the name *Cachalot*, of New Bedford; but as soon as we ranged alongside, I realized that I was booked for the sailor's horror—a cruise in a whaler. Badly as I wanted to get to sea, I had not bargained for this, and would have run some risks to get ashore again; but they took no chances, so we were all soon aboard. Before going forward, I took a comprehensive glance around, and saw that I was on board of a vessel belonging to a type which has almost disappeared off the face of the waters. A more perfect contrast to the trim-built English clipper-ships that I had been accustomed to I could hardly imagine. She was one of a class characterized by sailors as 'built by the mile, and cut off in lengths as you want 'em,' bow and stern almost alike, masts standing straight as broomsticks, and bowsprit soaring upwards at an angle of about forty-five degrees. She was as old-fashioned in her rig as in her hull; but I must not go into the technical differences between rigs, for fear of making myself tedious. Right in the centre of the deck, occupying a space of about ten feet by eight, was a square erection of brickwork, upon which my wondering gaze rested longest, for I had not the slightest idea what it could be. But I was rudely roused from my meditations by the harsh voice of one of the officers, who shouted, 'Naow then, git below an' stow yer dunnage, 'n look lively up agin.' I took the broad hint, and shouldering my traps, hurried forward to the fo'lk'sle, which was below deck. Tumbling down the steep ladder, I entered the gloomy den which was to be for so long my home, finding it fairly packed with my shipmates. A motley crowd they were. I had been used in English ships to considerable variety of nationality; but here were gathered, not only the representatives of five or six nations, but 'long-shoremen of all kinds, half of whom had hardly ever set eyes on a ship before! The whole space was undivided by partition, but I saw at once that black men and white had separated themselves, the blacks taking the port side and the whites the starboard. Finding a vacant bunk by the dim glimmer of the ancient teapot lamp that hung amidships, giving out as much smoke as light, I hurriedly shifted my coat for a 'jumper' or blouse, put on an old cap, and climbed into the fresh air again. For a double reason, even my seasoned head was feeling bad with the villainous reek of the place, and I did not want any of those hard-featured officers on deck to have any cause to complain of my 'hanging back.' On board ship, especially American ships, the first requisite for a sailor who wants to be treated properly is to



'show willing,' any suspicion of slackness being noted immediately, and the backward one marked accordingly. I had hardly reached the deck when I was confronted by a negro, the biggest I ever saw in my life. He looked me up and down for a moment, then opening his ebony features in a wide smile, he said, 'Great snakes! why, here's a sailor man for sure! Guess that's so, ain't it, Johnny?' I said 'yes' very curtly, for I hardly liked his patronizing air; but he snapped me up short with 'yes, *sir*, when yew speak to me, yew blank lime-juicer. I'se de fourf mate ob d's yar ship, en my name's Mistah Jones, 'n yew jest freeze on to dat ar, ef yew want ter lib long 'n die happy. See, sonny.' I *saw*, and answered promptly, 'I beg your pardon, *sir*, I didn't know.' 'Ob cawse yew didn't know, dat's all right, little Britisher; naow jest skip aloft 'n loose dat fore-taupsle.' 'Aye, aye, *sir*,' I answered cheerily, springing at once into the fore-rigging and up the ratlines like a monkey, but not too fast to hear him chuckle, 'Dat's a smart kiddy, I bet.' I had the big sail loose in double quick time, and sung out 'All gone, the fore-taupsle,' before any of the other sails were adrift. 'Loose the to-gantsle and staysles' came up from below in a voice like thunder, and I bounded up higher to my task. On deck I could see a crowd at the windlass heaving up anchor. I said to myself, 'They don't waste any time getting this packet away.' Evidently they were not anxious to test any of the crew's swimming powers. They were wise, for had she remained at anchor that night I verily believe some of the poor wretches would have tried to escape.

The anchor came aweigh, the sails were sheeted home, and I returned on deck to find the ship gathering way for the heads, fairly started on her long voyage.

What a bear-garden the deck was, to be sure! The black portion of the crew—Portuguese natives from the Western and Canary Islands—were doing their work all right in a clumsy fashion; but the farmers, and bakers, and draymen were being driven about mercilessly amid a perfect hurricane of profanity and blows. And right here I must say that, accustomed as I had always been to bad language all my life, what I now heard was a revelation to me. I would not, if I could, attempt to give a sample of it, but it must be understood that it was incessant throughout the voyage. No order could be given without it, under the impression, apparently, that the more curses the more speed.

Before nightfall we were fairly out to sea, and the ceremony of dividing the crew into watches was gone through. I found myself in the chief mate's or 'port' watch (they called it 'larboard,' a term I had never heard used before, it having long been obsolete in merchant ships), though the huge negro fourth mate seemed none

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too well pleased that I was not under his command, his being the starboard watch under the second mate.

As night fell, the condition of the 'greenies,' or non-sailor portion of the crew, was pitiable. Helpless from sea-sickness, not knowing where to go or what to do, bullied relentlessly by the ruthless petty officers—well, I never felt so sorry for a lot of men in my life. Glad enough I was to get below into the fo'lk'sle for supper, and a brief rest and respite from that cruelty on deck. A bit of salt junk and a piece of bread, *i.e.* biscuit, flinty as a pantile, with a pot of something sweetened with 'longlick' (molasses), made an apology for a meal, and I turned in. In a very few minutes oblivion came, making me as happy as any man can be in this world.

### 2

#### *Preparing for Action*

THE hideous noise always considered necessary in those ships when calling the watch, roused me effectively at midnight, 'eight bells.' I hurried on deck, fully aware that no leisurely ten minutes would be allowed here. 'Lay aft the watch,' saluted me as I emerged into the keen, strong air, quickening my pace accordingly to where the mate stood waiting to muster his men. As soon as he saw me, he said, 'Can you steer?' in a mocking tone; but when I quietly answered, 'Yes, sir,' his look of astonishment was delightful to see. He choked it down, however, and merely telling me to take the wheel, turned forward roaring frantically for his watch. I had no time to chuckle over what I knew was in store for him, getting those poor greenies collected from their several holes and corners, for on taking the wheel I found a machine under my hands such as I never even heard of before.

The wheel was fixed upon the tiller in such a manner that the whole concern travelled backwards and forwards across the deck in the maddest kind of way. For the first quarter of an hour, in spite of the September chill, the sweat poured off me in streams. And the course—well, it was not steering, it was sculling; the old bumboat was wobbling all around like a drunken tailor with two left legs. I fairly shook with apprehension lest the mate should come and look in the compass. I had been accustomed to hard words if I did not steer within half a point each way; but here was a 'gadget' that worked me to death, the result being a wake like a letter S. Gradually I got the hang of the thing, becoming easier in my mind on my own account. Even that was not an unmixed blessing, for I had now some leisure to listen to the goings-on around the deck.

Such brutality I never witnessed before. On board of English ships (except men-of-war) there is practically no discipline, which is bad, but this sort of thing was maddening. I knew how desperately ill all those poor wretches were, how helpless and awkward they would be if quite hale and hearty; but there was absolutely no pity for them, the officers seemed to be incapable of any feelings of compassion whatever. My heart sank within me as I thought of what lay before me, although I did not fear that their treatment would also be mine, since I was at least able to do my duty, and willing to work hard to keep out of trouble. Then I began to wonder what sort of voyage I was in for, how long it would last, and what my earnings were likely to be, none of which things I had the faintest idea of.

Fortunately, I was alone in the world. No one, as far as I knew, cared a straw what became of me; so that I was spared any worry on that head. And I had also a very definite and well-established trust in God, which I can now look back and see was as fully justified as I then believed it to be. So, as I could not shut my ears to the cruelties being carried on, nor banish thought by hard work, I looked up to the stately stars, thinking of things not to be talked about without being suspected of cant. So swiftly passed the time that when four bells struck (two o'clock) I could hardly believe my ears.

I was relieved by one of the Portuguese, and went forward to witness a curious scene. Seven stalwart men were being compelled to march up and down on that tumbling deck, men who had never before trodden anything less solid than the earth.

The third mate, a waspish, spiteful little Yankee with a face like an angry cat, strolled about among them, a strand of rope-yarns in his hand, which he wielded constantly, regardless where he struck a man. They fell about, sometimes four or five at once, and his blows flew thick and fast, yet he never seemed to weary of his ill-doing. It made me quite sick, and I longed to be aft at the wheel again. Catching sight of me standing irresolute as to what I had better do, he ordered me on the 'look-out,' a tiny platform between the 'knight heads,' just where the bowsprit joins the ship. Gladly I obeyed him, and perched up there looking over the wide sea, the time passed quickly away until eight bells (four o'clock) terminated my watch. I must pass rapidly over the condition of things in the fo'lk'sle, where all the greenies that were allowed below, were groaning in misery from the stifling atmosphere which made their sickness so much worse, while even that dreadful place was preferable to what awaited them on deck. There was a rainbow-coloured halo round the flame of the lamp, showing how very bad the air was; but in spite of that I turned

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

in and slept soundly till seven bells (7.20 a.m.) roused us to breakfast.

American ships generally have an excellent name for the way they feed their crews, but the whalers are a notable exception to that good rule. The food was really worse than that on board any English ship I have ever sailed in, so scanty also in quantity that it kept all the foremast hands at starvation point. But grumbling was dangerous, so I gulped down the dirty mixture mis-named coffee, ate a few fragments of biscuit, and filled up (?) with a smoke, as many better men are doing this morning. As the bell struck I hurried on deck—not one moment too soon—for as I stepped out of the scuttle I saw the third mate coming forward with a glitter in his eye that boded no good to laggards.

Before going any farther I must apologize for using so many capital I's, but up till the present I had been the only available white member of the crew forrard.

The decks were scrubbed spotlessly clean, and everything was neat and tidy as on board a man-of-war, contrary to all usual notions of the condition of a whaler. The mate was in a state of high activity, so I soon found myself very busily engaged in getting up whale-lines, harpoons, and all the varied equipment for the pursuit of whales. The number of officers carried would have been a good crew for the ship, the complete afterguard comprising captain, four mates, four harpooners or boat-steerers, carpenter, cooper, steward and cook. All these worthies were on deck and working with might and main at the preparations, so that the incompetence of the crowd forrard was little hindrance. I was pounced upon by 'Mistah' Jones, the fourth mate, whom I heard addressed familiarly as 'Goliath' and 'Anak' by his brother officers, and ordered to assist him in rigging the 'crow's-nest' at the main royal-mast head. It was a simple affair. There were a pair of cross-trees fitted to the mast, upon which was secured a tiny platform about a foot wide on each side of the mast, while above this foothold a couple of padded hoops like a pair of giant spectacles were secured at a little higher than a man's waist. When all was fast one could creep up on the platform, through the hoop, and, resting his arms upon the latter, stand comfortably and gaze around, no matter how vigorously the old barkly plunged and kicked beneath him. From that lofty eyrie I had a comprehensive view of the vessel. She was about 350 tons and fullship-rigged, that is to say, she carried square sails on all three masts. Her deck was flush fore and aft, the only obstructions being the brick-built 'try-works' in the waist, the galley, and cabin skylight right aft by the taffrail. Her bulwarks were set thickly round with clumsy looking wooden cranes, from which depended five boats. Two more boats

were secured bottom up upon a gallows aft, so she seemed to be well supplied in that direction. Mistah Jones, finding I did not presume upon his condescension, gradually unbent and furnished me with many interesting facts about the officers. Captain Slocum he said, was 'de debbil hisself, so jess yew keep yer lamps trim' fer him, sonny, taint helthy ter rile him.' The first officer, or *the mate* as he is always called *par excellence*, was an older man than the captain, but a good seaman, a good whalerman, and a gentleman. Which combination I found to be a fact, although hard to believe possible at the time. The second mate was a Portuguese about forty years of age, with a face like one of Vandyke's cavaliers, but as I now learned, a perfect fiend when angered. He also was a first-class whalerman, but an indifferent seaman. The third mate was nothing much but bad temper—not much sailor, nor much whaler, generally in hot water with the skipper, who hated him because he was an 'owner's man.' 'An de fourf mate,' wound up the narrator, straightening his huge bulk, 'am de bes' man in de ship, and de bigges'. Dey aint no whalemen in Noo Bedford caynt teach *me* nuffin, en ef it comes ter man-handlin'; w'y I jes' pick 'em two't a time 'n crack 'em togerrerr like so, see!' and he smote the palms of his great paws against each other, while I nodded complete assent.

The weather being fine, with a steady N.E. wind blowing, so that the sails required no attention, work proceeded steadily all the morning. The oars were sorted, examined for flaws, and placed in the boats; the whale-line, manilla rope like yellow silk, 1½ inch round, was brought on deck, stretched and coiled down with the greatest care into tubs, holding, some 200 fathoms, and others 100 fathoms each. New harpoons were fitted to poles of rough but heavy wood, without any attempt at neatness, but every attention to strength. The shape of these weapons was not, as is generally thought, that of an arrow, but rather like an arrow with one huge barb, the upper part of which curved out from the shaft. The whole of the barb turned on a stout pivot of steel, but was kept in line with the shaft by a tiny wooden peg which passed through barb and shaft, being then cut off smoothly on both sides. The point of the harpoon had at one side a wedge-shaped edge, ground to razor keenness, the other side was flat. The shaft, about thirty inches long, was of the best malleable iron, so soft that it would tie into a knot and straighten out again without fracture. Three harpoons, or 'irons' as they were always called, were placed in each boat, fitted one above the other in the starboard bow, the first for use being always one unused before. Opposite to them in the boat were fitted three lances for the purpose of *killing* whales, the harpoons being only the means by which the boat was attached to a

fish, and quite useless to inflict a fatal wound. These lances were slender spears of malleable iron about four feet long, with oval or heart-shaped points of fine steel about two inches broad, their edges kept keen as a surgeon's lancet. By means of a socket at the other end they were attached to neat handles, or 'lance-poles,' about as long again, the whole weapon being thus about eight feet in length, and furnished with a light line, or 'lance-warp,' for the purpose of drawing it back again when it had been darted at a whale.

Each boat was fitted with a centre-board, or sliding keel, which was drawn up, when not in use, into a case standing in the boat's middle, very much in the way. But the American whalers regard these clumsy contrivances as indispensable, so there's an end on't. The other furniture of a boat comprised five oars of varying lengths from sixteen to nine feet, one great steering oar of nineteen feet, a mast and two sails of great area for so small a craft, spritsail shape; two tubs of whale-line containing together 1800 feet, a keg of drinking water, and another long narrow one with a few biscuits, a lantern, candles and matches therein; a bucket and 'piggin' for baling, a small spade, a flag or 'whet,' a shoulder bomb-gun and ammunition, two knives and two small axes. A rudder hung outside by the stern.

With all this gear, although snugly stowed, a boat looked so loaded that I could not help wondering how six men would be able to work in her; but like most 'deep-water' sailors, I knew very little about boating. I was going to learn.

All this work and bustle of preparation was so rapidly carried on, and so interesting, that before supper-time everything was in readiness to commence operations, the time having gone so swiftly that I could hardly believe the bell when it sounded four times, six o'clock.

### 3

#### *Fishing Begins*

DURING all the bustle of warlike preparation that had been going on, the greenhorns had not suffered from inattention on the part of those appointed to look after them. Happily for them, the wind blew steadily, and the weather, thanks to the balmy influence of the Gulf Stream, was quite mild and genial. The ship was undoubtedly lively, as all good sea-boats are, but her motions were by no means so detestable to a sea-sick man as those of a driving steamer. So, in spite of their treatment, perhaps because of it, some of the poor fellows were beginning to take hold of things

'man-fashion,' although of course sea legs they had none, their getting about being indeed a pilgrimage of pain. Some of them were beginning to try the dreadful 'grub' (I cannot libel 'food' by using it in such a connection), thereby showing that their interest in life, even such a life as was now before them, was returning. They had all been allotted places in the various boats, intermixed with the seasoned Portuguese in such a way that the officer and harpooner in charge would not be dependant upon them entirely in case of a sudden emergency. Every endeavour was undoubtedly made to instruct them in their duties, albeit the teachers were all too apt to beat their information in with anything that came to hand, and persuasion found no place in their methods.

The reports I had always heard of the laziness prevailing on board whale ships were now abundantly falsified. From dawn to dark work went on without cessation. Everything was rubbed and scrubbed and scoured until no speck or soil could be found; indeed, no gentleman's yacht or man-of-war is kept more spotlessly clean than was the *Cachalot*.

A regular and severe routine of labour was kept up; and, what was most galling to me, instead of a regular four hours' watch on and off, night and day, all hands were kept on deck the whole day long, doing quite unnecessary tasks, apparently with the object of preventing too much leisure and consequent brooding over their unhappy lot. One result of this continual drive and tear was that all these landsmen became rapidly imbued with the virtues of cleanliness, which was extended to the den in which we lived, or I verily believe sickness would have soon thinned us out.

On the fourth day after leaving port we were all busy as usual except the four men in the 'crow's-nests,' when a sudden cry of 'Porps! porps!' brought everything to a standstill. A large school of porpoises had just joined us, in their usual clownish fashion, rolling and tumbling around the bows as the old bark wallowed along, surrounded by a wide ellipse of snowy foam. All work was instantly suspended, and active preparations made for securing a few of these frolicsome fellows. A 'block,' or pulley, was hung out at the bowsprit end, a whale-line passed through it and 'bent' (fastened) on to a harpoon. Another line with a running 'bowline,' or slip-noose, was also passed out to the bowsprit end, being held there by one man in readiness. Then one of the harpooners ran out along the back-ropes, which keep the jib-boom down, taking his stand beneath the bowsprit with the harpoon ready. Presently he raised his iron and followed the track of a rising porpoise with its point until the creature broke water. At the same instant the weapon left his grasp, apparently without any force behind it;

but we on deck, holding the line, soon found that our excited hauling lifted a big vibrating body clean out of the smother beneath. "Vast hauling!" shouted the mate, while as the porpoise hung dangling, the harpooner slipped the ready bowline over his body, gently closing its grip round the 'small' by the broad tail. Then we hauled on the noose-line, slacking away the harpoon, and in a minute had our prize on deck. He was dragged away at once and the operation repeated. Again and again we hauled them in, until the fore part of the deck was alive with the kicking, writhing sea-pigs, at least twenty of them. I had seen an occasional porpoise caught at sea before, but never more than one at a time. Here, however, was a wholesale catch. At last one of the harpooned ones plunged so furiously while being hauled up that he literally tore himself off the iron, falling, streaming with blood, back into the sea.

Away went all the school after him, tearing at him with their long well-toothed jaws, some of them leaping high in the air in their eagerness to get their due share of the cannibal feast. Our fishing was over for that time. Meanwhile one of the harpooners had brought out a number of knives, with which all hands were soon busy skinning the blubber from the bodies. Porpoises have no skin, that is hide, the blubber or coating of lard which encases them being covered by a black substance as thin as tissue paper. The porpoise hide of the boot maker is really leather, made from the skin of the *Beluga*, or 'white whale,' which is found only in the far north. The cover was removed from the 'try-works' amidships, revealing two gigantic pots set in a frame of brickwork side by side, capable of holding 200 gallons each. Such a cooking apparatus as might have graced a Brobdingnagian kitchen. Beneath the pots was the very simplest of furnaces, hardly as elaborate as the familiar copper-hole sacred to washing day. Square funnels of sheet-iron were loosely fitted to the flues, more as a protection against the oil boiling over into the fire than to carry away the smoke, of which from the peculiar nature of the fuel there was very little. At one side of the try-works was a large wooden vessel, or 'hopper,' to contain the raw blubber; at the other, a copper cistern or cooler of about 300 gallons capacity, into which the prepared oil was baled to cool off, preliminary to its being poured into the casks. Beneath the furnaces was a space as large as the whole area of the try-works, about a foot deep, which, when the fires were lighted, was filled with water to prevent the deck from burning.

It may be imagined that the blubber from our twenty porpoises made but a poor show in one of the pots; nevertheless, we got a barrel of very excellent oil from them. The fires were fed with 'scrap,' or pieces of blubber from which the oil had been boiled,



some of which had been reserved from the previous voyage. They burnt with a fierce and steady blaze, leaving but a trace of ash. I was then informed by one of the harpooners that no other fuel was ever used for boiling blubber at any time, there being always amply sufficient for the purpose.

The most interesting part of the whole business, though, to us poor half-starved wretches, was the plentiful supply of fresh meat. Porpoise beef is, when decently cooked, fairly good eating to a landsman; judge, then, what it must have been to us. Of course the tit-bits, such as the liver, kidneys, brains, etc., could not possibly fall to our lot; but we did not complain, we were too thankful to get something eatable, and enough of it. Moreover, although few sailors in English ships know it, porpoise beef improves vastly by keeping, getting tenderer every day the longer it hangs, until at last it becomes as tasty a viand as one could wish to dine upon. It was a good job for us that this *was* the case, for while the porpoises lasted the 'harness casks,' or salt beef receptacles, were kept locked; so if any man had felt unable to eat porpoise—well, there was no compulsion, he could go hungry.

We were now in the haunts of the Sperm Whale, or 'Cachalot,' a brilliant look-out being continually kept for any signs of their appearing. One officer and a foremast hand were continually on watch during the day in the main crow's-nest, one harpooner and a seaman in the fore one. A bounty of ten pounds of tobacco was offered to whoever should first report a whale, should it be secured, consequently there were no sleepy eyes up there. Of course none of those who were inexperienced stood much chance against the eagle-eyed Portuguese; but all tried their best, in the hope of perhaps winning some little favour from their hard taskmasters.

Every evening at sunset it was 'all hands shorten sail,' the constant drill rapidly teaching even these clumsy landsmen how to find their way aloft, and do something else besides hold on to anything like grim death when they got there.

At last, one beautiful day, the boats were lowered and manned, and away went the greenies on their first practical lesson in the business of the voyage. As before noticed, there were two greenies in each boat, they being so arranged that whenever one of them 'caught a crab,' which of course was about every other stroke, his failure made little difference to the boat's progress. They learned very fast under the terrible imprecations and storm of blows from the iron-fisted and iron-hearted officers, so that before the day was out the skipper was satisfied of our ability to deal with a 'fish' should he be lucky enough to 'raise' one. I was, in virtue of my experience, placed at the after-oar in the mate's boat, where it was my duty to attend to the 'main sheet' when the sail was set, where

also I had the benefit of the lightest oar except the small one used by the harpooner in the bow.

The very next day after our first exhaustive boat drill, a school of 'Black Fish' was reported from aloft, and with great glee the officers prepared for what they considered a rattling day's fun.

The Black Fish (*Phocæna Sp.*) is a small toothed whale, not at all unlike a miniature cachalot, except that its head is rounded at the front, while its jaw is not long and straight, but bowed. It is as frolicsome as the porpoise, gambolling about in schools of from twenty to fifty or more, as if really delighted to be alive. Its average size is from ten to twenty feet long, and seven or eight feet in girth, weight from one to three tons. Blubber about three inches thick, while the head is almost all oil, so that a good rich specimen will make between one and two barrels of oil of medium quality.

The school we were now in sight of was of middling size and about average weight of individuals, and the officers esteemed it a fortunate circumstance that we should happen across them as a sort of preliminary to our tackling the monarchs of the deep.

All the new harpoons were unshipped from the boats, and a couple of extra 'second' irons, as those that have been used are called, were put into each boat for use if wanted. The sails were also left on board. We lowered and left the ship, pulling right towards the school, the noise they were making in their fun effectually preventing them from hearing our approach. It is etiquette to allow the mate's boat first place, unless his crew is so weak as to be unable to hold their own; but as the mate always has first pick of the men this seldom happens. So, as usual, we were first, and soon I heard the order given, 'Stand up, Louey, and let 'em have it!' Sure enough, here we were right among them. Louis let drive, 'fastening' a whopper about twenty feet long. The injured animal plunged madly forward, accompanied by his fellows, while Louis calmly bent another iron to a 'short warp,' or piece of whale-line, the loose end of which he made a bowline with round the main line which was fast to the 'fish.' Then he fastened another 'fish,' and the queer sight was seen of these two monsters each trying to flee in opposite directions, while the second one ranged about alarmingly as his 'bridle' ran along the main line. Another one was secured in the same way, then the game was indeed great. The school had by this time taken the alarm and cleared out, but the other boats were all fast to fish, so that didn't matter. Now, at the rate our 'game' were going, it would evidently be a long while before they died, although, being so much smaller than a whale proper, a harpoon will often kill them at a stroke. Yet they were now so tangled or 'snarled erp,' as the mate said, that it was no easy matter to lance them without

great danger of cutting the line. However, we hauled up as close to them as we dared, and the harpooner got a good blow in, which gave the biggest of the three 'Jesse,' as he said, though why 'Jesse' was a stumper. Anyhow, it killed him promptly, while almost directly after another one saved further trouble by passing in his own checks. But he sank at the same time, drawing the first one down with him, so that we were in considerable danger of having to cut them adrift or be swamped. The 'wheft' was waved thrice as an urgent signal to the ship to come to our assistance with all speed, but in the meantime our interest lay in the surviving Black Fish keeping alive. Should he die, and, as was most probable, sink, we should certainly have to cut and lose the lot, tools included.

We waited in grim silence while the ship came up, so slowly, apparently, that she hardly seemed to move, but really at a good pace of about four knots an hour, which for her was not at all bad. She got alongside of us at last, and we passed up the bight of our line, our fish all safe, very much pleased with ourselves especially when we found that the other boats had only five between the three of them.

The fish secured to the ship, all the boats were hoisted except one, which remained alongside to sling the bodies. During our absence the ship-keepers had been busy rigging one of the cutting falls, an immense fourfold tackle from the main lowermast-head, of four-inch rope through great double blocks, large as those used at dockyards for lifting ships' masts and boilers. Chain-slings were passed around the carcasses, which gripped the animal at the 'small,' being prevented from slipping off by the broad spread of the tail. The end of the 'fall,' or tackle-rope, was then taken to the windlass, and we hove away cheerily, lifting the monsters right on deck. A mountainous pile they made. A short spell was allowed, when the whole eight were on board, for dinner; then all hands turned to again to 'french' the blubber, and prepare for trying-out. This was a heavy job, keeping all hands busy until it was quite dark, the latter part of the work being carried on by the light of a 'cresset,' the flames of which were fed with 'scrap,' which blazed brilliantly, throwing a big glare over all the ship. The last of the carcasses was launched overboard by about eight o'clock that evening, but not before some vast junks of beef had been cut off and hung up in the rigging for our food supply.

The try-works were started again, 'trying-out' going on busily all night, watch and watch taking their turn at keeping the pots supplied with minced blubber. The work was heavy, while the energetic way in which it was carried on made us all glad to take what rest was allowed us, which was scanty enough, as usual.

By nightfall the next day the ship had resumed her normal

appearance, and we were a tun and a quarter of oil to the good. Black Fish oil is of medium quality, but I learned that, according to the rule of 'roguery in all trades,' it was the custom to mix quantities such as we had just obtained with better class whale-oil, and thus get a much higher price than it was really worth.

Up till this time we had no sort of an idea as to where our first objective might be, but from scraps of conversation I had overheard among the harpooners, I gathered that we were making for the Cape Verde Islands or the Açores, in the vicinity of which a good number of moderate-sized sperm whales are often to be found. In fact, these islands have long been a nursery for whale-fishers, because the cachalot loves their steep-to shores, and the hardy natives, whenever and wherever they can muster a boat and a little gear, are always ready to sally forth and attack the unwary whale that ventures within their ken. Consequently more than half of the total crews of the American whaling fleet are composed of these islanders. Many of them have risen to the position of captain, and still more are officers and harpooners; but though undoubtedly brave and enterprising, they are cruel and treacherous, and in positions of authority over men of Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon origin, are apt to treat their subordinates with great cruelty.

## 4

*Bad Weather*

NAUTICAL routine in its essential details is much the same in all ships, whether naval, merchant, or whaling vessels. But while in the ordinary merchantman there are decidedly 'no more cats than can catch mice,' hardly, indeed, sufficient for all the mousing that should be done, in men-of-war and whaleships the number of hands carried, being far more than are wanted for everyday work, must needs be kept at unnecessary duties in order that they may not grow lazy and discontented.

For instance, in the *Cachalot* we carried a crew of thirty-seven all told, of which twenty-four were men before the mast, or common seamen, our tonnage being under 400 tons. Many a splendid clipper-ship carrying an enormous spread of canvas on four masts, and not overloaded with 2500 tons of cargo on board, carries twenty-eight or thirty all told, or even less than that. As far as we were concerned, the result of this was that our landsmen got so thoroughly drilled, that within a week of leaving port they hardly knew themselves for the clumsy clodhoppers they at first appeared to be.

We had now been eight days out, and in our leisurely way were

making fair progress across the Atlantic, having had nothing, so far, but steady breezes and fine weather. As it was late autumn—the first week in October—I rather wondered at this, for even in my brief experience I had learned to dread a ‘fall’ voyage across the ‘Western Ocean.’

Gradually the face of the sky changed, and the feel of the air, from balmy and genial, became raw and cheerless. The little wave tops broke short off and blew backwards, apparently against the wind, while the old vessel had an uneasy, unnatural motion, caused by a long, new swell rolling athwart the existing set of the sea. Then the wind became fitful and changeable, backing half round the compass, and veering forward again as much in an hour, until at last in one tremendous squall it settled in the N.W. for a business-like blow. Unlike the hurried merchantman who must needs ‘hang on’ till the last minute, only shortening the sail when absolutely compelled to do so, and at the first sign of the gales relenting, piling it on again, we were all snug long before the storm burst upon us, and now rode comfortably under the tiniest of storm staysails.

We were evidently in for a fair specimen of Western Ocean weather, but the clumsy-looking, old-fashioned *Cachalot* made no more fuss over it than one of the long-winged sea-birds that floated around, intent only upon snapping up any stray scraps that might escape from us. Higher rose the wind, heavier rolled the sea, yet never a drop of water did we ship, nor did anything about the deck betoken what a heavy gale was blowing. During the worst of the weather, and just after the wind had shifted back into the N.E., making an uglier cross sea than ever get up, along comes an immense four-masted iron ship homeward bound. She was staggering under a veritable mountain of canvas, fairly burying her bows in the foam at every forward drive, and actually wetting the clews of the upper topsails in the smothering masses of spray, that every few minutes almost hid her hull from sight.

It was a splendid picture; but—for the time—I felt glad I was not on board of her. In a very few minutes she was out of our ken, followed by the admiration of all. Then came, from the other direction, a huge steamship, taking no more notice of the gale than as if it were calm. Straight through the sea she rushed, dividing the mighty rollers to the heart, and often bestriding three seas at once, the centre one spreading its many tons of foaming water fore and aft, so that from every orifice spouted the seething brine. Compared with these greyhounds of the wave, we resembled nothing so much as some old lightship bobbing serenely around, as if part and parcel of the mid-Atlantic.

Our greenies were getting so well seasoned by this time that

even this rough weather did not knock any of them over, and from that time forward they had no more trouble from sea-sickness.

The gale gradually blew itself out, leaving behind only a long and very heavy swell to denote the deep-reaching disturbance that the ocean had endured. And now we were within the range of the Sargasso Weed, that mysterious *fucus* that makes the ocean look like some vast hayfield, and keeps the sea from rising, no matter how high the wind. It fell a dead calm, and the harpooners amused themselves by dredging up great masses of the weed, and turning out the many strange creatures abiding therein. What a world of wonderful life the weed is, to be sure! In it the flying fish spawn and the tiny cuttle-fish breed, both of them preparing bounteous provision for the larger denizens of the deep that have no other food. Myriads of tiny crabs and innumerable specimens of less-known shellfish, small fish of species as yet unclassified in any work on natural history, with jelly-fish of every conceivable and inconceivable shape, form part of this great and populous country in the sea. At one haul there was brought on board a mass of flying-fish spawn, about ten pounds in weight, looking like nothing so much as a pile of ripe white currants, and clinging together in a very similar manner.

Such masses of ova I had often seen cast up among the outlying rocks on the shores of the Caribbean Sea, when as a shipwrecked lad I wandered idly about unburying turtle eggs from their snug beds in the warm sand, and chasing the many-hued coral fish from one hiding-place to another.

While loitering in these smooth waters, waiting for the laggard wind, up came a shoal of dolphin, ready as at all times to attach themselves for awhile to the ship. Nothing is more singular than the manner in which deep-sea fish will accompany a vessel that is not going too fast—sometimes for days at a time. Most convenient too, and providing hungry Jack with many a fresh mess he would otherwise have missed. Of all these friendly fish, none is better known than the 'dolphin,' as from long usage sailors persist in calling them, and will doubtless do so until the end of the chapter. For the true dolphin (*Delphinidæ*) is not a fish at all, but a mammal—a warm-blooded creature that suckles its young, and in its most familiar form is known to most people as the porpoise. The sailor's 'dolphin,' on the other hand, is a veritable fish, with vertical tail fin instead of the horizontal one which distinguishes all the whale family, scales and gills.

It is well known to literature, under its sea-name, for its marvellous brilliancy of colour, and there are few objects more dazzling than a dolphin leaping out of a calm sea into the sunshine. The beauty of a dying dolphin, however, though sanctioned by many

generations of writers, is a delusion; all the glory of the fish departing as soon as he is withdrawn from his native element.

But this habit of digression grows upon one, and I must do my best to check it, or I shall never get through my task.

To resume then: when this school of dolphin (I can't for the life of me call them *Coryphæna hippuris*) came alongside, a rush was made for the 'granes'—a sort of five-pronged trident, if I may be allowed a baby bull. It was universally agreed among the fishermen that trying a hook and line was only waste of time and provocative of profanity! since every sailor knows that all the deep-water big fish require a living or apparently living bait. The fish, however, sheered off, and would not be tempted within reach of that deadly fork by any lure. Then did I cover myself with glory. For he who can fish cleverly and luckily may be sure of fairly good times in a whaler, although he may be no great things at any other work. I had a line of my own, and begging one of the small fish that had been hauled up in the Gulf weed, I got permission to go aft and fish over the taffrail. The little fish was carefully secured on the hook, the point of which just protruded near his tail. Then I lowered him into the calm blue waters beneath, and paid out line very gently, until my bait was a silvery spot about a hundred feet astern. Only a very short time, and my hopes rose as I saw one bright gleam after another glide past the keel, heading aft. Then came a gentle drawing at the line, which I suffered to slip slowly through my fingers until I judged it time to try whether I was right or wrong. A long hard pull, and my heart beat fast as I felt the thrill along the line that fishermen love. None of your high art here, but haul in hand over hand, the line being strong enough to land a 250 pound fish. Up he came, the beauty, all silver and scarlet and blue, five feet long if an inch, and weighing 35 pounds. Well, such a lot of astonished men I never saw. They could hardly believe their eyes. That such a daring innovation should be successful was hardly to be believed, even with the vigorous evidence before them. Even grim Captain Slocum came to look, and turned upon me as I thought a less lowering brow than usual, while Mr. Count, the mate, fairly chuckled again at the thought of how the little Britisher had wiped the eyes of these veteran fishermen. The captive was cut open, and two recent flying-fish found in his maw, which were utilized for new bait, with the result that there was a cheerful noise of hissing and spluttering in the galley soon after, and a mess of fish for all hands.

Shortly afterwards a fresh breeze sprang up, which proved to be the beginning of the N.E. trades, and fairly guaranteed us against any very bad weather for some time to come.

Somehow or other it had leaked out that we were to cruise the

Cape Verd Islands for a spell before working south, and the knowledge seemed to have quite an enlivening effect upon our Portuguese shipmates.

Most of them belonged there, and although there was but the faintest prospect of their getting ashore upon any pretext whatever, the possibility of seeing their island homes again seemed to quite transform them. Hitherto they had been very moody and exclusive, never associating with us in the white side, or attempting to be at all familiar. A mutual atmosphere of suspicion, in fact, seemed to pervade our quarters, making things already uncomfortable enough, still more so. Now, however, they fraternized with us, and in a variety of uncouth ways made havoc of the English tongue, as they tried to impress us with the beauty, fertility and general incomparability of their beloved Cape Verds. Of the eleven white men besides myself in the fore-castle, there were a middle-aged German baker, who had bolted from Buffalo; two Hungarians, who looked like noblemen disguised—in dirt; two slab-sided Yankees of about 22 from farms in Vermont; a drayman from New York; a French Canadian from the neighbourhood of Quebec; two Italians from Genoa; and two nondescripts that I never found out the origin of. Imagine, then, the babel of sound, and think—but no, it is impossible to think, what sort of a jargon was compounded of all these varying elements of language.

One fortunate thing, there was peace below. Indeed, the spirit seemed completely taken out of all of them, and by some devilish ingenuity the after-guard had been able to sow distrust between them all, while treating them like dogs, so that the miseries of their life were never openly discussed. My position among them gave me at times some uneasiness. Though I tried to be helpful to all, and was full of sympathy for their undeserved sufferings, I could not but feel that they would have been more than human had they not envied me my immunity from the kicks and blows they all shared so impartially. However, there was no help for it, so I went on as cheerily as I could.

A peculiarity of all these vessels, as I afterwards learned, was that no stated allowance of anything was made. Even the water was not served out to us, but was kept in a great scuttle-butt by the cabin door, to which every one who needed a drink had to go, and from which none might be carried away. No water was allowed for washing except from the sea; and every one knows, or should know, that neither flesh nor clothes can be cleansed with that. But a cask with a perforated top was lashed by the bowsprit and kept filled with urine, which I was solemnly assured by Goliath was the finest dirt-extractor in the world for clothes. The officers did not avail themselves of its virtues though, but were content with ley,



which was furnished in plenty by the ashes from the galley fire, where nothing but wood was used as fuel. Of course when rain fell we might have a good wash, if it was night and no other work was toward; but we were not allowed to store any for washing purposes. Another curious but absolutely necessary custom prevailed in consequence of the short commons under which we lived. When the portion of meat was brought down in its wooden kid, or tub, at dinner-time, it was duly divided as fairly as possible into as many parts as there were mouths. Then one man turned his back upon the carver, who, holding up each portion, called out, 'Who's this for?' Whatever name was mentioned by the arbitrator, that man owning it received the piece, and had perforce to be satisfied therewith. Thus justice was done to all in the only way possible, and without any friction whatever.

As some of us were without clothes except what we stood upright in, when we joined, the 'slop chest' was opened, and every applicant received from the steward what Captain Slocum thought fit to let him have, being debited with the cost against such wages as he might afterwards earn. The clothes were certainly of fairly good quality, if the price was high, and exactly suited to our requirements. Soap, matches, and tobacco were likewise supplied on the same terms, but at higher prices than I had ever heard of before for these necessities. After much careful inquiry I ascertained what, in the event of a successful voyage, we were likely to earn. Each of us were on the two hundredth 'lay' or share at \$200 per tun, which meant that for every two hundred barrels of oil taken on board, we were entitled to one, which we must sell to the ship at the rate of £40 per tun or £4 per barrel. Truly a magnificent outlook for young men bound to such a business for three or four years.

## 5

*Actual Warfare. Our First Whale*

SIMULTANEOUS ideas occurring to several people, or thought transference, whatever one likes to call the phenomenon, is too frequent an occurrence in most of our experience to occasion much surprise. Yet on the occasion to which I am about to refer, the matter was so very marked that few of us who took part in the day's proceedings are ever likely to forget it.

We were all gathered about the fo'lk'sle scuttle one evening, a few days after the gale referred to in the previous chapter, and the question of whale-fishing came up for discussion. Until that time, strange as it may seem, no word of this, the central idea of all our

mipds, had been mooted. Every man seemed to shun the subject, although we were in daily expectation of being called upon to take an active part in whale-fighting. Once the ice was broken, nearly all had something to say about it, and very nearly as many addle-headed opinions were ventilated as at a Colney Hatch debating society. For we none of us *knew* anything about it. I was appealed to continually to support this or that theory, but as far as whaling went I could only, like the rest of them, draw upon my imagination for details. How did a whale act, what were the first steps taken, what chance was there of being saved if your boat got smashed, and so on unto infinity. At last, getting very tired of this 'Portugee Parliament' of all talkers and no listeners, I went aft to get a drink of water before turning in. The harpooners and other petty officers were grouped in the waist, earnestly discussing the pros and cons of attack upon whales. As I passed I heard the mate's harpooner say, 'Feels like whale about. I bet a plug (of tobacco) we raise sperm whale to-morrow.' Nobody took his bet, for it appeared that they were mostly of the same mind, and while I was drinking I heard the officers in dignified conclave talking over the same thing. It was Saturday evening, and while at home people were looking forward to a day's respite from work and care, I felt that the coming day, though never taken much notice of on board, was big with the probabilities of strife such as I at least had at present no idea of. So firmly was I possessed by the prevailing feeling.

The night was very quiet. A gentle breeze was blowing, and the sky was of the usual 'Trade' character, that is, a dome of dark blue fringed at the horizon with peaceful cumulus clouds, almost motionless. I turned in at four a.m. from the middle watch and, as usual, slept like a babe. Suddenly I started wide awake, a long mournful sound sending a thrill to my very heart. As I listened breathlessly other sounds of the same character but in different tones joined in, human voices monotonously intoning in long drawn-out expirations the single word 'bl-o-o-o-o-w.' Then came a hurricane of noise overhead, and adjurations in no gentle language to the sleepers to 'tumble up lively there, no skulking, sperm whales.' At last, then, fulfilling all the presentiments of yesterday, the long dreaded moment had arrived. Happily there was no time for hesitation, in less than two minutes we were all on deck, and hurrying to our respective boats. There was no flurry or confusion, and except that orders were given more quietly than usual, with a manifest air of suppressed excitement, there was nothing to show that we were not going for an ordinary course of boat drill. The skipper was in the main crow's-nest with his binoculars. Presently he shouted, 'Naow then, Mr. Count, lower away soon's y'like. Small pod o'cows, an' one 'r two bulls layin'

off to west'ard of 'em.' Down went the boats into the water quietly enough, we all scrambled in and shoved off. A stroke or two of the oars were given to get clear of the ship, and one another, then oars were shipped and up went the sails. As I took my allotted place at the main-sheet, and the beautiful craft started off like some big bird, Mr. Count leant forward, saying impressively to me, 'Y'r a smart youngster, an' I've kinder took t'yer; but don't ye look ahead an' get galled, 'r I'll knock ye stiff wi' th' tiller; y'hear me? N' don't ye darc to make thct sheet fast, 'r ye'll die so sudden y' won't know whar y'r hurted.' I said as cheerfully as I could, 'All right, sir,' trying to look unconcerned, telling myself not to be a coward, and all sorts of things; but the cold truth is that I was scared almost to death because I didn't know what was coming. However, I did the best thing under the circumstances, obeyed orders and looked steadily astern, or up into the bronzed impassive face of my chief, who towered above me, scanning with eagle eyes the sea ahead. The other boats were coming flying along behind us, spreading wider apart as they came, while in the bows of each stood the harpooner with his right hand on his first iron, which lay ready, pointing over the bow in a raised fork of wood called the 'crutch.'

All of a sudden, at a motion of the chief's hand, the peak of our mainsail was dropped, and the boat swung up into the wind, laying 'hove to,' almost stationary. The centre-board was lowered to stop her drifting to leeward, although I cannot say it made much difference that ever I saw. *Now* what's the matter, I thought, when to my amazement the chief addressing me said, 'Wonder why we've hauled up, don't ye?' 'Yes, sir, I do,' said I. 'Wall,' said he, 'the fish hev sounded, an' 'ef we run over 'em, we've seen the last ov 'em. So we wait awhile till they rise agin, 'n then we'll prob'ly git thar' 'r thareabouts before they sound agin.' With this explanation I had to be content, although if it be no clearer to my readers than it then was to me, I shall have to explain myself more fully later on. Silently we lay, rocking lazily upon the gentle swell, no other word being spoken by any one. At last Louis, the harpooner, gently breathed 'blo-o-o-w;' and there, sure enough, not half a mile away on the lee beam, was a little bushy cloud of steam apparently rising from the sea. At almost the same time as we kept away all the other boats did likewise, and just then catching sight of the ship, the reason for this apparently concerted action was explained. At the main-mast head of the ship was a square blue flag, and the ensign at the peak was being dipped. These were signals well understood and promptly acted upon by those in charge of the boats, who were thus guided from a point of view at least one hundred feet above the sea.

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

'Stand up, Louey,' the mate murmured softly. I only just stopped myself in time from turning my head to see why the order was given. Suddenly there was a bump, at the same moment the mate yelled, 'Give't to him, Louey, give't to him!' and to me, 'Haul that main sheet, naow haul, why don't ye?' I hauled it flat aft, and the boat shot up into the wind, rubbing sides as she did so with what to my troubled sight seemed an enormous mass of black india-rubber floating. As we *crawled* up into the wind, the whale went into convulsions befitting his size and energy. He raised a gigantic tail on high, threshing the water with deafening blows, rolling at the same time from side to side until the surrounding sea was white with froth. I felt in an agony lest we should be crushed under one of those fearful strokes, for Mr. Count appeared to be oblivious of possible danger, although we seemed to be now drifting back on to the writhing leviathan. In the agitated condition of the sea, it was a task of no ordinary difficulty to unship the tall mast, which was of course the first thing to be done. After a desperate struggle, and a narrow escape from falling overboard of one of the men, we got the long 'stick,' with the sail bundled around it, down and 'flected' aft, where it was secured by the simple means of sticking the 'heel' under the after thwart, two-thirds of the mast extending out over the stern. Meanwhile, we had certainly been in a position of the greatest danger, our immunity from damage being unquestionably due to anything but precaution taken to avoid it.

By the time the oars were handled, and the mate had exchanged places with the harpooner, our friend the enemy had 'sounded,' that is, he had gone below for a change of scene, marvelling no doubt what strange thing had befallen him. Agreeably to the accounts which I, like most boys, had read of the whale fishery, I looked for the rushing of the line round the loggerhead (a stout wooden post built into the boat aft), to raise a cloud of smoke with occasional bursts of flame; so as it began to slowly surge round the post, I timidly asked the harpooner whether I should throw any water on it. 'Wot for?' growled he, as he took a couple more turns with it. Not knowing 'what for,' and hardly liking to quote my authorities here, I said no more, but waited events. 'Hold him up, Louey, hold him up, cain't ye?' shouted the mate, and to my horror, down went the nose of the boat almost under water, while at the mate's order everybody scrambled aft into the elevated stern sheets.

The line sang quite a tune as it was grudgingly allowed to surge round the loggerhead, filling one with admiration at the strength shown by such a small rope. This sort of thing went on for about twenty minutes, in which time we quite emptied

the large tub and began on the small one. As there was nothing whatever for us to do while this was going on, I had ample leisure for observing the little game that was being played about a quarter of a mile away. Mr. Cruce, the second mate, had got a whale and was doing his best to kill it; but he was severely handicapped by his crew, or rather had been, for two of them were now temporarily incapable of either good or harm. They had gone quite 'batchy' with fright, requiring a not too gentle application of the tiller to their heads in order to keep them quiet. The remedy, if rough, was effectual, for 'the subsequent proceedings interested them no more.' Consequently his manœuvres were not so well or rapidly executed as he, doubtless, could have wished, although his energy in lancing that whale was something to admire and remember. Hatless, his shirt-tail out of the waist of his trousers streaming behind him like a banner, he lunged and thrust at the whale alongside of him, as if possessed of a destroying devil, while his half articulate yells of rage and blasphemy were audible even to us.

Suddenly our boat fell backward from her 'slantindicular' position with a jerk, and the mate immediately shouted, 'Haul line, there! look lively, now, you—so on, etcetera, etcetera' (he seemed to invent new epithets on every occasion). The line came in hand over hand, and was coiled in a wide heap in the stern sheets, for silky as it was, it could not be expected in its wet state to lie very close. As it came flying in the mate kept a close gaze upon the water immediately beneath us, apparently for the first glimpse of our antagonist. When the whale broke water, however, he was some distance off, and apparently as quite as a lamb. Now, had Mr. Count been a prudent or less ambitious man, our task would doubtless have been an easy one, or comparatively so; but, being a little over-grasping, he got us all into serious trouble. We were hauling up to our whale in order to lance it, and the mate was standing, lance in hand, only waiting to get near enough, when up comes a large whale right alongside of our boat, so close, indeed, that I might have poked my finger in his little eye, if I had chosen. The sight of that whale at liberty, and calmly taking stock of us like that, was too much for the mate. He lifted his lance and hurled it at the visitor, in whose broad flank it sank, like a knife into butter, right up to the pole-hitches. The recipient disappeared like a flash, but before one had time to think, there was an awful crash beneath us, and the mate shot up into the air like a bomb from a mortar. He came down in a sitting posture on the mast-thwart; but as he fell, the whole framework of the boat collapsed like a derelict umbrella. Louis quietly chopped the line and severed our connection with the other whale, while in accordance with our instructions we drew each man his oar across the boat and lashed

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

it firmly down with a piete of line spliced to each thwart for the purpose. This simple operation took but a minute, but before it was completed we were all up to our necks in the sea. Still in the boat, it is true, and therefore not in such danger of drowning as if we were quite adrift; but, considering that the boat was reduced to a mere bundle of loose planks, I, at any rate, was none too comfortable. Now, had he known it, was the whale's golden opportunity; but he, poor wretch, had had quite enough of our company, and cleared off without any delay, wondering, no doubt, what fortunate accident had rid him of our very unpleasant attentions.

I was assured that we were all as safe as if we were on board the ship, to which I answered nothing; but, like Jack's parrot, I did some powerful thinking. Every little wave that came along swept clean over our heads, sometimes coming so suddenly as to cut a breath in half. If the wind should increase—but no—I wouldn't face the possibility of such a disagreeable thing. I was cool enough now in a double sense, for although we were in the tropics, we soon got thoroughly chilled.

By the position of the sun it must have been between ten a.m. and noon, and we, of the crew, had eaten nothing since the previous day at supper, when, as usual, the meal was very light. Therefore, I suppose we felt the chill sooner than the better-nourished mate and harpooner, who looked rather scornfully at our blue faces and chattering teeth.

In spite of all assurances to the contrary, I have not the least doubt in my own mind that a very little longer would have relieved us of *all* our burdens finally. Because the heave of the sea had so loosened the shattered planks upon which we stood that they were on the verge of falling all asunder. Had they done so we must have drowned, for we were cramped and stiff with cold and our constrained position. However, unknown to us, a bright look-out upon our movements had been kept from the crow's-nest the whole time. We should have been relieved long before, but that the whale killed by the second mate was being secured, and another boat, the fourth mate's, being picked up, having a hole in her bilge you could put your head through. With all these hindrances, especially securing the whale, we were fortunate to be rescued as soon as we were, since it is well known that whales are of much higher commercial value than men.

However, help came at last, and we were hauled alongside. Long exposure had weakened us to such an extent that it was necessary to hoist us on board, especially the mate, whose 'sudden stop,' when he returned to us after his little aerial excursion, had shaken his sturdy frame considerably, a state of body which the subsequent soaking had by no means improved. In my innocence

I imagined that we should be commiserated for our misfortunes by Captain Slocum, and certainly be relieved from further duties until we were a little recovered from the rough treatment we had just undergone. But I never made a greater mistake. The skipper cursed us all (except the mate, whose sole fault the accident undoubtedly was) with a fluency and vigour that was, to put it mildly, discouraging. Moreover, we were informed that he 'wouldn't have no adjective skulking;' we must 'turn to' and do something after wasting the ship's time and property in such a blanked manner. There was a limit, however, to our obedience, so although we could not move at all for awhile, his threats were not proceeded with farther than theory.

A couple of slings were passed around the boat, by means of which she was carefully hoisted on board, a mere dilapidated bundle of sticks and raffle of gear. She was at once removed aft out of the way, the business of cutting in the whale claiming precedence over everything else just then. The preliminary proceedings consisted of rigging the 'cutting stage.' This was composed of two stout planks a foot wide and ten feet long, the inner ends of which were suspended by strong ropes over the ship's side about four feet from the water, while the outer extremities were upheld by tackles from the main rigging, and a small crane abreast the try-works.

These planks were about thirty feet apart, their two outer ends being connected by a massive plank which was securely bolted to them. A handrail about as high as a man's waist, supported by light iron stanchions, ran the full length of this plank on the side nearest the ship, the whole fabric forming an admirable standing-place from whence the officers might, standing in comparative comfort, cut and carve at the great mass below to their hearts' content.

So far the prize had been simply held alongside by the whale-line, which at death had been 'rove' through a hole cut in the solid gristle of the tail; but now it became necessary to secure the carcase to the ship in some more permanent fashion. Therefore, a massive chain like a small ship's cable was brought forward, and in a very ingenious way, by means of a tiny buoy and a hand-lead, passed round the body, one end brought through a ring in the other, and hauled upon until it fitted tight round the 'small' or part of the whale next the broad spread of the tail. The free end of the fluke-chain was then passed in through a mooring-pipe forward, firmly secured to a massive bitt at the heel of the bowsprit (the fluke-chain-bitt), and all was ready.

But the subsequent proceedings were sufficiently complicated to demand a fresh chapter.

• *'Dirty Work for Clean Money'*

IF in the preceding chapter too much stress has been laid upon the smashing of our own boat and consequent sufferings, while little or no notice was taken of the kindred disaster to Mistah Jones' vessel, my excuse must be that the experience 'filled me right up to the chin,' as the mate concisely, if inelegantly, put it. Poor Goliath was indeed to be pitied, for his well-known luck and capacity as a whaleman seemed on this occasion to have quite deserted him. Not only had his boat been stove upon first getting on to the whale, but he hadn't even had a run for his money. It appeared that upon striking his whale, a small, lively cow, she had at once 'settled,' allowing the boat to run over her; but just as they were passing, she rose, gently enough, her pointed hump piercing the thin skin of half-inch cedar as if it had been cardboard. She settled again immediately, leaving a hole behind her a foot long by six inches wide, which effectually put a stop to all further fishing operations on the part of Goliath and his merry men for that day, at any rate. It was all *so* quiet, and so tame and so stupid, no wonder Mistah Jones felt savage. When Captain Slocum's fluent profanity flickered around him, including vehemently all he might be supposed to have any respect for, he did not even *look* as if he would like to talk back; he only looked sick and tired of being himself.

The third mate, again, was of a different category altogether. He had distinguished himself by missing every opportunity of getting near a whale while there was a 'loose' one about, and then 'saving' the crew of Goliath's boat, who were really in no danger whatever. His iniquity was too great to be dealt with by mere bad language. He crept about like a homeless dog—much, I am afraid, to my secret glee, for I couldn't help remembering his untiring cruelty to the green hands on first leaving port.

In consequence of these little drawbacks we were not a very jovial crowd forrard or aft. Not that hilarity was ever particularly noticeable among us, but just now there was a very decided sense of wrong-doing over us all, and a general fear that each of us was about to pay the penalty due to some other delinquent. But fortunately there was work to be done. Oh, blessed work! how many awkward situations you have extricated people from! How many distracted brains have you soothed and restored, by your steady irresistible pressure of duty to be done and brooking of no delay!

The first thing to be done was to cut the whale's head off. This



operation, involving the greatest amount of labour in the whole of the cutting in, was taken in hand by the first and second mates, who, armed with twelve-feet spades, took their station upon the stage, leaned over the handrail to steady themselves, and plunged their weapons vigorously down through the massive neck of the animal—if neck it could be said to have—following a well-defined crease in the blubber. At the same time the other officers passed a heavy chain sling around the long, narrow lower jaw, hooking one of the big cutting tackles into it, the 'fall' of which was then taken to the windlass and hove tight, turning the whale on her back. A deep cut was then made on both sides of the rising jaw, the windlass was kept going, and gradually the whole of the throat was raised high enough for a hole to be cut through its mass, into which the strap of the second cutting tackle was inserted and secured by passing a huge toggle of oak through its eye. The second tackle was then hove taut, and the jaw, with a large piece of blubber attached, was cut off from the body with a boarding-knife, a tool not unlike a cutlass blade set into a three-foot-long wooden handle.

Upon being severed the whole piece swung easily inboard and was lowered on deck. The fast tackle was now hove upon while the third mate on the stage cut down diagonally into the blubber on the body, which the purchase ripped off in a broad strip or 'blanket' about five feet wide and a foot thick. Meanwhile the other two officers carved away vigorously at the head, varying their labours by cutting a hole right through the snout. This when completed received a heavy chain for the purpose of securing the head. When the blubber had been about half stripped off the body, a halt was called in order that the work of cutting off the head might be finished, for it was a task of incredible difficulty. It was accomplished at last, and the mass floated astern by a stout rope, after which the windlass pawls clattered merrily, the 'blankets' rose in quick succession, and were cut off and lowered into the square of the main hatch or 'blubber-room.' A short time sufficed to strip off the whole of the body-blubber, and when at last the tail was reached, the backbone was cut through, the huge mass of flesh floating away to feed the innumerable scavengers of the sea. No sooner was the last of the blubber lowered into the hold than the hatches were put on and the head hauled up alongside. Both tackles were secured to it and all hands took to the windlass levers. This was a small cow whale of about thirty barrels, that is, yielding that amount of oil, so it was just possible to lift the entire head on board; but as it weighed as much as three full-grown elephants, it was indeed a heavy lift for even our united forces, trying our tackle to the utmost. The weather was very fine, and the ship rolled but little; even then, the strain upon the mast was

terrific, and right glad was I when at last the immense cube of fat, flesh, and bone was eased inboard and gently lowered on deck.

As soon as it was secured the work of dividing it began. From the snout a triangular mass was cut, which was more than half pure spermaceti. This substance was contained in spongy cells held together by layers of dense white fibre, exceedingly tough and elastic, and called by the whalers 'white-horse'. The whole mass, or 'junk' as it is called, was hauled away to the ship's side and firmly lashed to the bulwarks for the time being, so that it might not 'take charge' of the deck during the rest of the operations.

The upper part of the head was now slit open lengthwise, disclosing an oblong cistern or 'case' full of liquid spermaceti, clear as water. This was baled out with buckets into a tank, concreting as it cooled into a wax-like substance, bland and tasteless. There being now nothing more remaining about the skull of any value, the lashings were loosed, and the first leeward roll sent the great mass plunging overboard with a mighty splash. It sank like a stone eagerly followed by a few small sharks that were hovering near.

As may be imagined, much oil was running about the deck, for so saturated was every part of the creature with it that it really gushed like water during the cutting-up process. None of it was allowed to run to waste, though, for the scupper-holes which drain the deck were all carefully plugged, and as soon as the 'junk' had been dissected all the oil was carefully 'squeezed' up and poured into the try-pots.

Two men were now told off as 'blubber-room men,' whose duty it became to go below, and squeezing themselves in as best they could between the greasy masses of fat, cut it up into 'horse-pieces' about eighteen inches long and six inches square. Doing this they became perfectly saturated with oil, as if they had taken a bath in a tank of it; for as the vessel rolled it was impossible to maintain a footing, and every fall was upon blubber running with oil. A machine of wonderful construction had been erected on deck in a kind of shallow trough about six feet long by four feet wide and a foot deep. At some remote period of time it had no doubt been looked upon as a triumph of ingenuity, a patent mincing machine. Its action was somewhat like that of a chaff-cutter, except that the knife was not attached to the wheel, and only rose and fell, since it was not required to cut right through the 'horse-pieces' with which it was fed. It will be readily understood that in order to get the oil quickly out of the blubber, it needs to be sliced as thin as possible, but for convenience in handling the refuse (which is the only fuel used) it is not chopped up in small pieces, but every 'horse-piece' is very deeply scored as it were, leaving a thin strip to hold the slices together. This then was the order of work. Two

harpooners attended the try-pots, replenishing them with minced blubber from the hopper at the port side, and baling out the sufficiently boiled oil into the great cooling tank on the starboard. One officer superintended the mincing, another exercised a general supervision over all. There was no man at the wheel and no look-out, for the vessel was 'hove-to' under two close-reefed topsails and fore-topmast-staysail, with the wheel lashed hard down. A look-out man was unnecessary, since we could not run anybody down, and if anybody ran us down, it would only be because all hands were asleep, for the glare of our try-work fire, to say nothing of the blazing cresset before mentioned, could have been seen for many miles. So we toiled watch and watch, six hours on and six off, the work never ceasing for an instant night or day. Though the work was hard and dirty, and the discomfort of being so continually wet through with oil great, there was only one thing dangerous about the whole business. That was the job of filling and shifting the huge casks of oil. Some of these were of enormous size, containing 350 gallons when full, and the work of moving them about the greasy deck of a rolling ship was attended with a terrible amount of risk. For only four men at most could get fair hold of a cask, and when she took it into her silly old hull to start rolling, just as we had got one half-way across the deck, with nothing to grip your feet, and the knowledge that one stumbling man would mean a sudden slide of the ton and a half weight, and a little heap of mangled corpses somewhere in the lee scuppers—well one always wanted to be very thankful when the lashings were safely passed.

The whale being a small one, as before noted, the whole business was over within three days, and the decks scrubbed and re-scrubbed until they had quite regained their normal whiteness. The oil was poured by means of a funnel and long canvas hose into the casks stowed in the ground tier at the bottom of the ship, and the gear, all carefully cleaned and neatly 'stopped up,' stowed snugly away below again.

This long and elaborate process is quite different from that followed on board the Arctic whaleships, whose voyages are of short duration, and who content themselves with merely cutting the blubber up small and bringing it home to have the oil expressed. But the awful putrid mass discharged from a Greenland's hold is of very different quality and value, apart from the nature of the substance, to the clear and sweet oil, which after three years in cask is landed from a south-seaman as inoffensive in smell and flavour as the day it was shipped. No attempt is made to separate the oil and spermaceti beyond boiling the 'head matter,' as it is called, by itself first, and putting it into casks which

are not filled up with the body oil. Spermaceti exists in all the oil, especially that from the dorsal hump; but it is left for the refiners ashore to extract and leave the oil quite free from any admixture of the wax-like substance, which causes it to become solid at temperatures considerably above the freezing-point.

Uninteresting as the preceding description may be, it is impossible to understand anything of the economy of a south-sea whaler without giving it, and I have felt it the more necessary because of the scanty notice given to it in the only two works published on the subject, both of them highly technical, and written for scientific purposes by medical men. Therefore I hope to be forgiven if I have tried the patience of my readers by any prolixity.

It will not, of course, have escaped the reader's notice that I have not hitherto attempted to give any details concerning the structure of the whale just dealt with. The omission is intentional. During this, our first attempt at real whaling, my mind was far too disturbed by the novelty and danger of the position in which I found myself for the first time, for me to pay any intelligent attention to the party of the second part.

But I may safely promise that from the workman's point of view, the habits, manners, and build of the whales shall be faithfully described as I saw them during my long acquaintance with them, earnestly hoping that if my story be not as technical or scientific as that of Drs. Bennett and Beale, it may be found fully as accurate and reliable; and perhaps the reader, being like myself a mere layman, so to speak, may be better able to appreciate description free from scientific formula and nine-jointed words.

Two things I did notice on this occasion which I will briefly allude to before closing this chapter. One was the peculiar skin of the whale. It was a bluish-black, and as thin as gold-beater's skin. So thin, indeed, and tender, that it was easily scraped off with the fingernail. Immediately beneath it, upon the surface of the blubber, was a layer or coating of what for want of a better simile I must call fine short fur, although unlike fur it had no roots or apparently any hold upon the blubber. Neither was it attached to the skin which covered it; in fact, it seemed merely a sort of packing between the skin and the surface of the thick layer of solid fat which covered the whole area of the whale's body. The other matter which impressed me was the peculiarity of the teeth. For up till that time I had held, in common with most seamen, and landsmen, too, for that matter, the prevailing idea that a 'whale' lived by 'suction' (although I did not at all know what that meant), and that it was impossible for him to swallow a herring. Yet here was a mouth manifestly intended for greater things in the way of gastronomy than herrings; nor did it require

more than the most casual glances to satisfy one of so obvious a fact. Then the teeth were heroic in size, protuding some four or five inches from the gum, and solidly set more than that into its firm and compact substance. They were certainly not intended for mastication, being, where thickest, three inches apart, and tapering to a short point, curving slightly backwards. In this specimen, a female, and therefore small as I have said, there were twenty of them on each side, the last three or four near the gullet being barely visible above the gum.

Another most convincing reason why no mastication could have been possible was that there were no teeth visible in the upper jaw. Opposed to each of the teeth was a socket where a tooth should apparently have been, and this was conclusive evidence of the soft and yielding nature of the great creature's food. But there were signs that at some period of the development of the whale it had possessed a double row of teeth, because at the bottom of these upper sockets we found in a few cases what seemed to be an abortive tooth, not one that was growing, because they had no roots, but a survival of teeth that had once been perfect and useful, but from disuse, or lack of necessity for them, had gradually ceased to come to maturity. The interior of the mouth and throat was of a livid white, and the tongue was quite small for so large an animal. It was almost incapable of movement, being somewhat like a fowl's. Certainly it could not have been protruded even from the angle of the mouth, much less have extended along the parapet of that lower mandible, which reminded one of the beak of some mighty albatross or stork.

## 7

*Getting Southward*

WHETHER our recent experience had altered the captain's plans or not I do not know, but much to the dismay of the Portuguese portion of the crew, we did but sight, dimly and afar off, the outline of the Cape Verde Islands before our course was altered, and we bore away for the southward like any other outward-bounder. That is, as far as our course went; but as to the speed, we still retained the leisurely tactics hitherto pursued, shortening sail every night, and, if the weather was very fine, setting it all again at daybreak.

The morose and sullen temper of the captain had been, if anything, made worse by recent events, and we were worked as hard as if the success of the voyage depended upon our ceaseless toil of scrubbing, scraping, and polishing. Discipline was indeed main-

tailed at a high pitch of perfection, no man daring to look awry, much less complain of any hardship, however great. Even this humble submissiveness did not satisfy our tyrant, and at last his cruelty took a more active shape. One of the long Yankee farmers from Vermont, Abner Cushing by name, with the ingenuity which seems inbred in his 'cute countrymen, must needs try his hand at making a villainous decoction which he called 'beer,' the principal ingredients in which were potatoes and molasses. Now potatoes formed no part of our dietary, so Abner set his wits to work to steal sufficient for his purpose, and succeeded so far that he obtained half a dozen. I have very little doubt that one of the Portuguese in the fore-castle conveyed the information aft for some reason best known to himself, any more than we white men all had that in a similar manner all our sayings and doings, however trivial, became at once known to the officers. However, the fact that the theft was discovered soon became painfully evident, for we had a visit from the after-guard in force one afternoon, and Abner with his brewage was haled to the quarter-deck. There, in the presence of all hands, he was arraigned, found guilty of stealing the ship's stores, and sentence passed upon him. By means of two small pieces of fishing line he was suspended by his thumbs in the weather rigging, in such a manner that when the ship was upright his toes touched the deck, but when she rolled his whole weight hung from his thumbs. This of itself one would have thought sufficient torture for almost any offence, but in addition to it he received two dozen lashes with an improvised cat-o'-nine-tails, laid on by the brawny arm of one of the harpooners. We were all compelled to witness this, and our feelings may be imagined. When, after what seemed a terribly long time to me (Heaven knows what it must have been to him!), he fainted, although no chicken I nearly fainted too, from conflicting emotions of sympathy and impotent rage.

He was then released in leisurely fashion, and we were permitted to take him forward and revive him. As soon as he was able to stand on his feet, he was called on deck again, and not allowed to go below till his watch was over. Meanwhile Captain Slocum improved the occasion by giving us a short harangue, the burden of which was that we had now seen a *little* of what any of us might expect if we played any 'dog's tricks' on him. But you can get used to anything, I suppose; so after the first shock of the atrocity was over, things went on again pretty much as usual.

For the first and only time in my experience, we sighted St. Paul's Rocks, a tiny group of jagged peaks protruding from the Atlantic nearly on the Equator. Stupendous mountains they must be, rising almost sheer for about four and a half miles from the

ocean bed. Although they appear quite insignificant specks upon the vast expanse of water, one could not help thinking how sublime their appearance would be were they visible from the plateau whence they spring. Their chief interest to us at the time arose from the fact that, when within about three miles of them, we were suddenly surrounded by a vast school of bonito. These fish, so-named by the Spaniards from their handsome appearance, are a species of mackerel, a branch of the *Scombridae* family, and attain a size of about two feet long and forty pounds weight, though their average dimensions are somewhat less than half that. They feed entirely upon flying-fish and the small leaping squid or cuttle-fish, but love to follow a ship, playing around her, if her pace be not too great, for days together. Their flesh resembles beef in appearance, and they are warm-blooded; but, from their habitat being mid-ocean, nothing is known with any certainty of their habits of breeding.

The orthodox method of catching them on board ship is to cover a suitable hook with a piece of white rag a couple of inches long, and attach it to a stout line. The fisherman then takes his seat upon the jibboom end, having first, if he is prudent, secured a sack to the jibstay in such a manner that its mouth gapes wide. Then he unrolls his line, and as the ship forges ahead the line, blowing out, describes a curve, at the end of which the bait, dipping to the water occasionally, roughly represents a flying-fish. Of course, the faster the ship is going, the better the chance of deceiving the fish, since they have less time to study the appearance of the bait. It is really an exaggerated and clumsy form of fly-fishing, and, as with that elegant pastime, much is due to the skill of the fisherman.

As the bait leaps from crest to crest of the wavelets thrust aside by the advancing ship, a fish more adventurous or hungrier than the rest will leap at it, and in an instant there is a dead, dangling weight of from ten to forty pounds hanging at the end of your line thirty feet below. You haul frantically, for he may be poorly hooked, and you cannot play him. In a minute or two, if all goes well, he is plunged in the sack, and safe. But woe unto you if you have allowed the jeers of your shipmates to dissuade you from taking a sack out with you.

The struggles of these fish are marvellous, and a man runs great risk of being shaken off the boom, unless his legs are firmly locked in between the guys. Such is the tremendous vibration that a twenty-pound bonito makes in a man's grip, that it can be felt in the cabin at the other end of the ship; and I have often come in triumphantly with one, having lost all feeling in my arms and a goodly portion of skin off my breast and side, where I have

embraced the prize in a 'grim determination to hold him at all hazards, besides being literally drenched with his blood.

Like all our fishing operations on board the *Cachalot*, this day's fishing was conducted on scientific principles, and resulted in twenty-five fine fish being shipped, which were a welcome addition to our scanty allowance. Happily for us, they would not take the salt in that sultry latitude soon enough to preserve them; for, when they can be salted, they become like brine itself, and are quite unfit for food. Yet we should have been compelled to eat salt bonito, or go without meat altogether, if it had been possible to cure them.

We were now fairly in the 'horse latitudes,' and, much to our relief, the rain came down in occasional deluges, permitting us to wash well and often. I suppose the rains of the tropics have been often enough described to need no meagre attempts of mine to convey an idea of them; yet I have often wished I could make home-keeping friends understand how far short what they often speak of as a 'tropical shower' falls of the genuine article. The nearest I can get to it is the idea of an ocean suspended overhead, out of which the bottom occasionally falls. Nothing is visible or audible but the glare and roar of falling water, and a ship's deck, despite the many outlets, is full enough to swim about in in a very few minutes. At such times the whole celestial machinery of rain-making may be seen in full working order. Five or six mighty waterspouts in various stages of development were often within easy distance of us; once, indeed, we watched the birth, growth, and death of one less than a mile away. First, a big, black cloud, even among that great assemblage of *nimbi*, began to belly downward, until the centre of it tapered into a stem, and the whole mass looked like a vast, irregularly-moulded funnel. Lower and lower it reached, as if feeling for a soil in which to grow, until the sea beneath was agitated sympathetically, rising at last in a sort of pointed mound to meet the descending column. Our nearness enabled us to see that both descending and rising parts were whirling violently in obedience to some invisible force, and when they had joined each other, although the spiral motion did not appear to continue, the upward rush of the water through what was now a long elastic tube was very plainly to be seen. The cloud overhead grew blacker and bigger, until its gloom was terrible. The pipe, or stem, got thinner gradually, until it became a mere thread; nor, although watching closely, could we determine when the connection between sea and sky ceased—one could not call it severed. The point rising from the sea settled almost immediately amidst a small commotion, as of a whirlpool. The tail depending from the cloud slowly shortened, and the mighty reservoir lost



the vast bulge which had hung so threateningly above. Just before the final disappearance of the last portion of the tube, a fragment of cloud appeared to break off. It fell near enough to show by its thundering roar what a body of water it must have been, although it looked like a saturated piece of dirty rag in its descent.

For whole days and nights together we sometimes lay almost 'as idle as a painted ship upon a painted ocean,' when the deep blue dome above matched the deep blue plain below, and never a fleck of white appeared in sky or sea. This perfect stop to our progress troubled none, although it aggravates a merchant skipper terribly. As for the objects of our search, they had apparently all migrated other-whither, for never a sign of them did we see. Finbacks, a species of rorqual, were always pretty numerous, and, as if they knew how useless they were to us, came and played around like exaggerated porpoises. One in particular kept us company for several days and nights. We knew him well, from a great triangular scar on his right side, near the dorsal fin. Sometimes he would remain motionless by the side of the ship, a few feet below the surface, as distinctly in our sight as a gold-fish in a parlour globe; or he would go under the keel, and gently chafe his broad back to and fro along it, making queer tremors run through the vessel, as if she were scraping over a reef. Whether from superstition or not I cannot tell, but I never saw any creature injured out of pure wantonness, except sharks, while I was on board the *Cachalot*. Of course, injuries to men do not count. Had that finback attempted to play about a passenger ship in such a fashion, all the loungers on board would have been popping at him with their revolvers and rifles without ever a thought of compunction; yet here, in a vessel whose errand was whale-fishing, a whale enjoyed perfect immunity. It was very puzzling. At last my curiosity became too great to bear any longer, and I sought my friend Mistah Jones at what I considered a favourable opportunity. I found him very gracious and communicative, and I got such a lecture on the natural history of the cetacea as I have never forgotten—the outcome of a quarter-century's experience of them, and afterwards proved by me to be correct in every detail, which latter is a great deal more than can be said of any written natural history that ever I came across. But I will not go into that now. Leaning over the rail, with the great rorqual laying perfectly still a few feet below, I was told to mark how slender and elegant were his proportions. 'Clipper-built,' my Mentor termed him. He was full seventy feet long, but his greatest diameter would not reach ten feet. His snout was long and pointed, while both top and bottom of his head were nearly flat. When he came up to breathe, which he did out of the top of his head, he showed us that, instead

of teeth, he had a narrow fringe of baleen (whalebone) all around his upper jaws, although 'I kaint see whyfor, kase he lib on all sort er fish, s'long's dey ain't too big. I serpose w'en he kaint get nary fish he do de same ez de "bowhead"—go er siftin eout dem little tings we calls whale-feed wiv dat ar 'rangement he carry in his mouf.' 'But why don't we harpoon him?' I asked. Goliath turned on me a pitying look, as he replied, 'Sonny, ef yew wuz ter go en stick iron inter dat ar fish, yew'd fink de hole bottom fell eout kerblunk. W'en I uz young 'n foolish, a finback range 'longside me one day, off de Seychelles. I just done gone miss' a spam whale, and I was kiender mad,—muss ha' bin. Wall, I let him ab it blam 'tween de ribs. If I lib ten tousan year, ain't gwine ter fergit dat ar. Wa'nt no time ter spit, tell ye; eberybody hang ober de side ob de boat. Wiz—poof!—de line all gone. Clar to glory, I neber see it go. Ef it hab ketch anywhar, nobody eber see us too. Fus, I t'ought I jump ober de side—neber face de skipper any mo'. But he uz er good ole man, en he only say, "Don't be sech blame jackass any more." En I don't.' From which lucid narration I gathered that the finback had himself to thank for his immunity from pursuit. "Sides," persisted Goliath, 'wa' yew gwine do wiv' him? Ain't six inch uv blubber anywhere 'bout his long ugly carkiss; en dat dirty lill' rag 'er whalebone he got in his mouf, 'taint worf fifty cents. En mor'n dat, we pick up a dead one when I uz in de ole *Rainbow*—done choke hisself, I spec, en we cut him in. He stink fit ter pison de debbil, en, after all, we get eighteen bar'l ob dirty oil out ob him. Wa'nt worf de clean sparm scrap we use ter bile him. G' 'way!' Which emphatic adjuration, addressed not to me, but to the unconscious monster below, closed the lesson for the time.

The calm still persisted, and, as usual, fish began to abound, especially flying-fish. At times, disturbed by some hungry bonito or dolphin, a shoal of them would rise—a great wave of silver—and skim through the air, rising and falling for perhaps a couple of hundred yards before they again took to the water; or a solitary one of larger size than usual would suddenly soar into the air, a heavy splash behind him showing by how few inches he had missed the jaws of his pursuer. Away he would go in a long, long curve, and, meeting the ship in his flight, would rise in the air, turn off at right angles to his former direction, and spin away again, the whirl of his wing-fins distinctly visible as well as audible. At last he would incline to the water, but just as he was about to enter it there would be an eddy—the enemy was there waiting—and he would rise twenty, thirty feet, almost perpendicularly, and dart away fully a hundred yards on a fresh course before the drying of his wing membranes compelled him to drop. In the face of such a sight as this, which is of everyday occurrence in these latitudes,

how trivial and misleading the statements made by the natural history books seem.

They tell their readers that the *Exocetus Volitans* 'does not fly; does not flutter its wings; can only take a prolonged leap,' and so on. The misfortune attendant upon such books seems, to an unlearned sailor like myself, to be that, although posing as authorities, most of the authors are content to take their facts not simply at second-hand, but even unto twenty-second-hand. So the old fables get repeated, and brought up to date, and it is nobody's business to take the trouble to correct them.

The weather continued calm and clear, and as the flying-fish were about in such immense numbers, I ventured to suggest to Goliath that we might have a try for some of them. I verily believe he thought I was mad. He stared at me for a minute, and then, with an indescribable intonation, said, 'How de ol' Satan yew fink yew gwain ter get 'm, hey? Ef yew specs ter fool dis chile wiv any dem lime-juice yarns, 'bout lanterns 'n boats at night-time, yew's 'way off.' I guessed he meant the fable current among English sailors, that if you hoist a sail on a calm night in a boat where flying-fish abound, and hang a lantern in the middle of it, the fish will fly in shoals at the lantern, strike against the sail, and fall in heaps in the boat. It *may* be true, but I never spoke to anybody who has seen it done, nor is it the method practised in the only place in the world where flying-fishing is followed for a living. So I told Mr. Jones that if we had some circular nets of small mesh made and stretched on wooden hoops, I was sure we should be able to catch some. He caught at the idea, and mentioned it to the mate, who readily gave his permission to use a boat. A couple of 'Guineamen' (a very large kind of flying-fish, having four wings) flew on board that night, as if purposely to provide us with the necessary bait.

Next morning, about four bells, the sea being like a mirror, unruffled by a breath of wind, we lowered and paddled off from the ship about a mile. When far enough away, we commenced operations by squeezing in the water some pieces of fish that had been kept for the purpose until they were rather high-flavoured. The exuding oil from this fish spread a thin film for some distance around the boat, through which, as through a sheet of glass, we could see a long way down. Minute specks of the bait sank slowly through the limpid blue, but for at least an hour there was no sign of life. I was beginning to fear that I should be called to account for misleading all hands, when, to my unbounded delight, an immense shoal of flying-fish came swimming round the boat, eagerly picking up the savoury morsels. We grasped our nets, and, leaning over the gunwale, placed them silently in the water,

pressing them downward and in towards the boat at the same time. Our success was great and immediate. We lifted the wanderers by scores, while I whispered imploringly, 'Be careful not to scare them; don't make a sound.' All hands entered into the spirit of the thing with great eagerness. As for Mistah Jones, his delight was almost more than he could bear. Suddenly one of the men, in lifting his net, slipped on the smooth bottom of the boat, jolting one of the oars. There was a gleam of light below as the school turned—they had all disappeared instanter. We had been so busy that we had not noticed the dimensions of our catch; but now, to our great joy, we found that we had at least eight hundred fish nearly as large as herrings. We at once returned to the ship, having been absent only two hours, during which we had caught sufficient to provide all hands with three good meals. Not one of the crew had ever seen or heard of such fishing before, so my pride and pleasure may be imagined. A little learning may be a dangerous thing at times, but it certainly is often handy to have about you. The habit of taking notice and remembering has often been the means of saving many lives in suddenly-met situations of emergency, at sea perhaps more than anywhere else, and nothing can be more useful to a sailor than the practice of keeping his weather-eye open.

In Barbadoes there is established the only regular flying-fishery in the world, and in just the manner I have described, except that the boats are considerably larger, is the whole town supplied with delicious fish at so trifling a cost as to make it a staple food among all classes.

But I find that I am letting this chapter run to an unconscionable length, and it does not appear as if we were getting at the southward very fast either. Truth to tell, our progress was mighty slow; but we gradually crept across the belt of calms, and a week after our never-to-be-forgotten haul of flying-fish we got the first of the south-east trades, and went away south at a good pace—for us. We made the Island of Trinidad with its strange conical-topped pillar, the Ninepin Rock, but did not make a call, as the skipper was beginning to get fidgety at not seeing any whales, and anxious to get down to where he felt reasonably certain of falling in with them. Life had been very monotonous of late, and much as we dreaded still the prospect of whale-fighting (by 'we,' of course, I mean the chaps forward), it began to lose much of its terror for us, so greatly did we long for a little change. Keeping, as we did, out of the ordinary track of ships, we hardly ever saw a sail. We had no recreations; fun was out of the question; and had it not been for a Bible, a copy of Shakespeare, and a couple of cheap copies of 'David Copperfield' and 'Bleak House,' all of which were mine, we should have had no books.

*Abner's Whale*

IN a previous chapter I have referred to the fact of a bounty being offered to whoever should first sight a useful whale, payable only in the event of the prize being secured by the ship. In consequence of our ill-success, and to stimulate the watchfulness of all, that bounty was now increased from ten pounds of tobacco to twenty, or fifteen dollars, whichever the winner chose to have. Most of us whites regarded this as quite out of the question for us, whose untrained vision was as the naked eye to a telescope when pitted against the eagle-like sight of the Portuguese. Nevertheless, we all did our little best, and I know, for one, that when I descended from my lofty perch, after a two hours' vigil, my eyes often ached and burned for an hour afterwards from the intensity of my gaze across the shining waste of waters.

Judge, then, of the surprise of everybody, when one forenoon watch, three days after we had lost sight of Trinidad, a most extraordinary sound was heard from the fore crow's-nest. I was, at the time, up at the main, in company with Louis, the mate's harpooner, and we stared across to see whatever was the matter. The watchman was unfortunate Abner Cushing, whose trivial offence had been so severely punished a short time before, and he was gesticulating and howling like a madman. Up from below came the deep growl of the skipper, 'Foremast head, there, what d'ye say?' 'B-b-b-blow, s-s-sir,' stammered Abner; 'a big whale right in the way of the sun, sir.' 'See anythin', Louey?' roared the skipper to my companion, just as we had both 'raised' the spout almost in the glare cast by the sun. 'Yessir,' answered Louis; 'but I kaint make him eout yet, sir.' 'All right; keep yer eye on him, and lemme know sharp;' and away he went aft for his glasses.

The course was slightly altered, so that we headed direct for the whale, and in less than a minute afterwards we saw distinctly the great black column of a sperm whale's head rise well above the sea, scattering a circuit of foam before it, and emitting a bushy, tufted burst of vapour into the clear air. 'There she white-waters! Ah bl-o-o-o-o-w, blow, blow!' sang Louis; and then, in another tone, 'Sperm whale, sir; big, 'lone fish, headin' 'beout east-by-nothe.' 'All right. 'Way down from aloft,' answered the skipper, who was already half-way up the main-rigging; and like squirrels we slipped out of our hoops and down the backstays, passing the skipper like a flash as he toiled upwards, bellowing orders as he went. Short as our journey down had been, when we arrived on

deck we found all ready for a start. But as the whale was at least seven miles away, and we had a fair wind for him, there was no hurry to lower, so we all stood at attention by our respective boats, waiting for the signal. I found, to my surprise, that, although I was conscious of a much more rapid heart-beat than usual, I was not half so scared as I expected to be—that the excitement was rather pleasant than otherwise. There were a few traces of funk about some of the others still; but as for Abner, he was fairly transformed; I hardly knew the man. He was one of Goliath's boat's crew, and the big darkey was quite proud of him. His eyes sparkled, and he chuckled and smiled constantly, as one who is conscious of having done a grand stroke of business, not only for himself, but for all hands. 'Lower away boats!' came peeling down from the skipper's lofty perch, succeeded instantly by the rattle of the patent blocks as the falls flew through them, while the four beautiful craft took the water with an almost simultaneous splash. The ship-keepers had trimmed the yards to the wind and hauled up the courses, so that simply putting the helm down deadened our way, and allowed the boats to run clear without danger of fouling one another. To shove off and hoist sail was the work of a few moments, and with a fine working breeze away we went. As before, our boat, being the chief's, had the post of honour; but there was now only one whale, and I rather wondered why we had all left the ship. According to expectations, down he went when we were within a couple of miles of him, but quietly and with great dignity, elevating his tail perpendicularly in the air, and sinking slowly from our view. Again I found Mr. Count talkative.

'Thet whale 'll stay down fifty minutes, I guess,' said he, 'fer he's every gill ov a hundred en twenty bar'l; and don't yew fergit it.' 'Do the big whales give much more trouble than the little ones?' I asked, seeing him thus chatty. 'Wall, it's jest ez it happens, boy—just ez it happens. I've seen a fifty-bar'l bull make the purtiest fight I ever hearn tell ov—a fight thet lasted twenty hours, stove three boats, 'n killed two men. Then, again, I've seen a hundred 'n fifty bar'l whale lay 'n take his grooel 'thout hardly wunkin 'n eyelid—never moved ten fathom from fust iron till fin cout. So yew may say, boy, that they're like peepul—got thair individooal pekyewlyarities, an' thars no countin' on 'em for sartin nary time.' I was in great hopes of getting some useful information while his mood lasted; but it was over, and silence reigned. Nor did I dare to ask any more questions; he looked so stern and fierce. The scene was very striking. Overhead, a bright blue sky just fringed with fleecy little clouds; beneath, a deep blue sea with innumerable tiny wavelets dancing and glittering in the blaze of the sun; but all swayed in one direction by a great, solemn swell that slowly

rolled from east to west, like the measured breathing of some world-supporting monster. Four little craft in a group, with twenty-four men in them, silently waiting for battle with one of the mightiest of God's creatures—one that was indeed a terrible foe to encounter were he but wise enough to make the best use of his opportunities. Against him we came with our puny weapons, of which I could not help reminding myself that 'he laugheth at the shaking of a spear.' But when the man's brain was thrown into the scale against the instinct of the brute, the contest looked less unequal than at first sight, for *there* is the secret of success. My musings were very suddenly interrupted. Whether we had overrun our distance, or the whale, who was not 'making a passage,' but feeding, had changed his course, I do not know; but, anyhow, he broke water close ahead, coming straight for our boat. His great black head, like the broad bow of a dumb barge, driving the waves before it, loomed high and menacing to me, for I was not forbidden to look ahead now. But coolly, as if coming alongside the ship, the mate bent to the big steer-oar, and swung the boat off at right angles to her course, bringing her back again with another broad sheer as the whale passed foaming. This manœuvre brought us side by side with him before he had time to realize that we were there. Up till that instant he had evidently not seen us, and his surprise was correspondingly great. To see Louis raise his harpoon high above his head, and with a hoarse grunt of satisfaction plunge it into the black, shining mass beside him up to the hitches, was indeed a sight to be remembered. Quick as thought he snatched up a second harpoon, and as the whale rolled from us it flew from his hands, burying itself like the former one, but lower down the body. The great impetus we had when we reached the whale carried us a long way past him, out of all danger from his struggles. No hindrance was experienced from the line by which we were connected with the whale, for it was loosely coiled in a space for the purpose in the boat's bow to the extent of two hundred feet, and this was cast overboard by the harpooner as soon as the fish was fast. He made a fearful to-do over it, rolling completely over several times backward and forward, at the same time smiting the sea with his mighty tail, making an almost deafening noise and pother. But we were comfortable enough, while we unshipped the mast and made ready for action, being sufficiently far away from him to escape the full effect of his gambols. It was impossible to avoid reflecting, however, upon what *would* happen if, in our unprepared and so far helpless state, he were, instead of simply tumbling about in an aimless, blind sort of fury, to rush at the boat and try to destroy it. Very few indeed would survive such an attack, unless the tactics were radically altered. No doubt they would be, for

practices grow up in consequence of the circumstances with which they have to deal.

After the usual time spent in furious attempts to free himself from our annoyance, he betook himself below, leaving us to await his return, and hasten it as much as possible by keeping a severe strain upon the line. Our efforts in this direction, however, did not seem to have any effect upon him at all. Flake after flake ran out of the tubs, until we were compelled to hand the end of our line to the second mate to splice his own on to. Still it slipped away, and at last it was handed to the third mate, whose two tubs met the same fate. It was now Mistah Jones' turn to 'bend on,' which he did with many chuckles as of a man who was the last resource of the unfortunate. But his face grew longer and longer as the never-resting line continued to disappear. Soon he signalled us that he was nearly out of line, and two or three minutes after he bent on his 'drogue' (a square piece of plank with a rope tail spliced into its centre, and considered to hinder a whale's progress at least as much as four boats), and let go the end. We had each bent on our drogues in the same way, when we passed our ends to one another. So now our friend was getting along somewhere below with 7200 feet of  $1\frac{1}{2}$ -inch rope, and weight additional equal to the drag of sixteen 30-foot boats.

Of course we knew that, unless he were dead and sinking, he could not possibly remain much longer beneath the surface. The exhibition of endurance we had just been favoured with was a very unusual one, I was told, it being a rare thing for a cachalot to take out two boats' lines before returning to the surface to spout.

Therefore, we separated as widely as was thought necessary, in order to be near him on his arrival. It was, as might be imagined, some time before we saw the light of his countenance; but when we did, we had no difficulty in getting alongside of him again. My friend Goliath, much to my delight, got there first, and succeeded in picking up the bight of the line. But having done so, his chance of distinguishing himself was gone. Hampered by the immense quantity of sunken line which was attached to the whale, he could do nothing, and soon received orders to cut the bight of the line and pass the whale's end to us. He had hardly obeyed, with a very bad grace, when the whale started off to windward with us at a tremendous rate. The other boats, having no line, could do nothing to help, so away we went alone, with barely a hundred fathoms of line, in case he should take it into his head to sound again. The speed at which he went made it appear as if a gale of wind was blowing, and we flew along the sea surface, leaping from crest to crest of the waves with an incessant succession of cracks like pistol-shots. The flying spray drenched us and prevented us from seeing



him, but I fully realized that it was nothing to what we should have to put up with if the wind freshened much. One hand was kept baling the water out which came so freely over the bows, but all the rest hauled with all their might upon the line, hoping to get a little closer to the flying monster. Inch by inch we gained on him, encouraged by the hoarse objurgations of the mate, whose excitement was intense. After what seemed a terribly long chase, we found his speed slackening, and we redoubled our efforts. Now we were close upon him; now, in obedience to the steersman, the boat sheered out a bit, and we were abreast of his labouring flukes; now the mate hurls his quivering lance with such hearty good-will that every inch of its slender shaft disappears within the huge body. 'Lay off! Off with her, Louey!' screamed the mate; and she gave a wide sheer away from the whale, not a second too soon. Up flew that awful tail, descending with a crash upon the water not two feet from us. 'Out oars! Pull, two! starn, three!' shouted the mate; and as we obeyed our foe turned to fight. Then might one see how courage and skill were such mighty factors in the apparently unequal contest. The whale's great length made it no easy job for him to turn, while our boat, with two oars a-side, and the great leverage at the stern supplied by the nineteen-foot steer-oar, circled, backed, and darted ahead like a living thing animated by the mind of our commander. When the leviathan settled, we gave a wide berth to his probable place of ascent; when he rushed at us, we dodged him; when he paused, if only momentarily, in we flew, and got home a fearful thrust of the deadly lance.

All fear was forgotten now—I panted, thirsted for his life. Once, indeed, in a sort of frenzy, when for an instant we lay side by side with him, I drew my sheath-knife, and plunged it repeatedly into the blubber, as if I were assisting in his destruction. Suddenly the mate gave a howl: 'Starn all—starn all! oh, starn!' and the oars bent like canes as we obeyed. There was an upheaval of the sea just ahead; then slowly, majestically, the vast body of our foe rose into the air. Up, up it went, while my heart stood still, until the whole of that immense creature hung on high, apparently motionless, and then fell—a hundred tons of solid flesh—back into the sea. On either side of that mountainous mass the waters rose in shining towers of snowy foam, which fell in their turn, whirling and eddying around us as we tossed and fell like a chip in a whirlpool. Blinded by the flying spray, baling for very life to free the boat from the water with which she was nearly full, it was some minutes before I was able to decide whether we were still uninjured or not. Then I saw, at a little distance, the whale lying quietly. As I looked he spouted, and the vapour was red with his blood. 'Starn all!' again cried our chief, and we retreated to a considerable distance. The

old warrior's practised eye had detected the coming climax of our efforts, the dying agony or 'flurry' of the great mammal. Turning upon his side, he began to move in a circular direction, slowly at first, then faster and faster, until he was rushing round at tremendous speed, his great head raised quite out of water at times, clashing his enormous jaws. Torrents of blood poured from his spout-hole, accompanied by hoarse bellowings, as of some gigantic bull, but really caused by the labouring breath trying to pass through the clogged air passages. The utmost caution and rapidity of manipulation of the boat was necessary to avoid his maddened rush, but this gigantic energy was short-lived. In a few minutes he subsided slowly in death, his mighty body reclined on one side, the fin uppermost waving limply as he rolled to the swell, while the small waves broke gently over the carcass in a low, monotonous surf, intensifying the profound silence that had succeeded the tumult of our conflict with the late monarch of the deep. Hardly had the flurry ceased, when we hauled up alongside of our hard won prize, in order to secure a line to him in a better manner than at present for hauling him to the ship. This was effected by cutting a hole through the tough, gristly substance of the flukes with the short 'boat-spade,' carried for the purpose. The end of the line, cut off from the faithful harpoon that had held it so long, was then passed through this hole and made fast. This done, it was 'Smoke-oh!' The luxury of that rest and refreshment was something to be grateful for, coming, as it did, in such complete contrast to our recent violent exertions.

The ship was some three or four miles off to leeward, so we reckoned she would take at least an hour and a half to work up to us. Meanwhile, our part of the performance being over, and well over, we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves, lazily rocking on the gentle swell by the side of a catch worth at least £800. During the conflict I had not noticed what now claimed attention—several great masses of white, semi-transparent-looking substance floating about, of huge size and irregular shape. But one of these curious lumps came floating by as we lay, tugged at by several fish, and I immediately asked the mate if he could tell me what it was and where it came from. He told me that, when dying, the cachalot always ejected the contents of his stomach, which were invariably composed of such masses as we saw before us; that he believed the stuff to be portions of big cuttle-fish, bitten off by the whale for the purpose of swallowing, but he wasn't sure. Anyhow, I could haul this piece alongside now, if I liked, and see. Secretly wondering at the indifference shown by this officer of forty years' whaling experience to such a wonderful fact as appeared to be here presented, I thanked him, and, sticking the boat-hook into the lump,

drew it alongside. It was at once evident that it was a massive fragment of cuttle-fish—tentacle or arm—as thick as a stout man's body, and with six or seven sucking-discs or *acetabula* on it. These were about as large as a saucer, and on their inner edge were thickly set with hooks or claws all round the rim, sharp as needles, and almost the shape and size of a tiger's.

To what manner of awful monster this portion of limb belonged, I could only faintly imagine; but of course I remembered, as any sailor would, that from my earliest sea-going I had been told that the cuttle-fish was the biggest in the sea, although I never even began to think it might be true until now. I asked the mate if he had ever seen such creatures as this piece belonged to alive and kicking. He answered, languidly, 'Wall, I guess so; but I don't take any stock in fish, 'cept for provisions er ile—en thet's a fact.' It will be readily believed that I vividly recalled this conversation when, many years after, I read an account by the Prince of Monaco of his discovery of a gigantic squid, to which his naturalist gave the name of *Lepidoteuthis Grimaldii*! Truly the indifference and apathy manifested by whalers generally to everything except commercial matters is wonderful—hardly to be credited. However, this was a mighty revelation to me. For the first time, it was possible to understand that, contrary to the usual notion of a whale's being unable to swallow a herring, here was a kind of whale that could swallow—well, a block four or five feet square apparently; who lived upon creatures as large as himself, if one might judge of their bulk by the sample to hand; but being unable, from only possessing teeth in one jaw, to masticate his food, was compelled to tear it in sizable pieces, bolt it whole, and leave his commissariat department to do the rest.

While thus ruminating, the mate and Louis began a desultory conversation concerning what they termed 'ambergrease.' I had never even heard the word before, although I had a notion that Milton, in 'Paradise Regained,' describing the Satanic banquet, had spoken of something being 'gris-amber steamed.' They could by no means agree as to what this mysterious substance was, how it was produced, or under what conditions. They knew that it was sometimes found floating near the dead body of a sperm whale—the mate, in fact, stated that he had taken it once from the rectum of a cachalot—and they were certain that it was of great value—from one to three guineas per ounce. When I got to know more of the natural history of the sperm whale, and had studied the literature of the subject, I was no longer surprised at their want of agreement, since the learned doctors who have written upon the subject do not seem to have come to definite conclusions either.

By some it is supposed to be the product of a diseased condition

of the creature; others consider that it is merely the excreta, which, normally fluid, has by some means become concreted. It is nearly always found with cuttle-fish beaks imbedded in its substance, showing that these indigestible portions of the sperm whale's food have in some manner become mixed with it during its formation in the bowel. Chemists have analyzed it with scanty results. Its great value is due to its property of intensifying the power of perfumes, although, strange to say, it has little or no odour of its own, a faint trace of musk being perhaps detectable in some cases. The Turks are said to use it for a truly Turkish purpose, which need not be explained here, while the Moors are credited with a taste for it in their cookery. About both these latter statements there is considerable doubt; I only give them for what they are worth, without committing myself to any definite belief in them.

The ship now neared us fast, and as soon as she rounded-to, we left the whale and pulled towards her, paying out line as we went. Arriving alongside, the line was handed on board, and in a short time the prize was hauled to the gangway. We met with a very different reception this time. The skipper's grim face actually looked almost pleasant as he contemplated the colossal proportions of the latest addition to our stock. He was indeed a fine catch, being at least seventy feet long, and in splendid condition. As soon as he was secured alongside in the orthodox fashion, all hands were sent to dinner, with an intimation to look sharp over it. Judging from our slight previous experience, there was some heavy labour before us, for this whale was nearly four times as large as the one caught off the Cape Verdes. And it was so. Verily those officers toiled like Titans to get that tremendous head off, even the skipper taking a hand. In spite of their efforts, it was dark before the heavy job was done. As we were in no danger of bad weather, the head was dropped astern by a hawser until morning, when it would be safer to dissect it. All that night we worked incessantly, ready to drop with fatigue, but not daring to suggest the possibility of such a thing. Several of the officers and harpooners were allowed a few hours off, as their special duty of dealing with the head at daylight would be so arduous as to need all their energies. When day dawned we were allowed a short rest, while the work of cutting up the head was undertaken by the rested men. At seven bells (7.30) it was 'turn to' all hands again. The 'junk' was hooked on to both cutting tackles, and the windlass manned by everybody who could get hold. Slowly the enormous mass rose, canting the ship heavily as it came, while every stick and rope aloft complained of the great strain upon them. When at last it was safely shipped, and the tackles cast off, the size of this small portion of a full-grown cachalot's body could be realized, not before.

It was hauled from the gangway by tackles, and securely lashed to the rail running round beneath the top of the bulwarks for that purpose—the 'lash-rail'—where the top of it towered up as high as the third ratline of the main-rigging. Then there was another spell, while the 'case' was separated from the skull. This was too large to get on board, so it was lifted half-way out of water by the tackles, one hooked on each side; then they were made fast, and a spar rigged across them at a good height above the top of the case. A small block was lashed to this spar, through which a line was rove. A long, narrow bucket was attached to one end of this rope; the other end on deck was attended by two men. One unfortunate beggar was perched aloft on the above-mentioned spar, where his position, like the main-yard of Marryatt's verbose carpenter was 'precarious and not at all permanent.' He was provided with a pole, with which he pushed the bucket down through a hole cut in the upper end of the 'case,' whence it was drawn out by the chaps on deck full of spermaceti. It was a weary, unsatisfactory process, wasting a great deal of the substance being baled out; but no other way was apparently possible. The grease blew about, drenching most of us engaged in an altogether unpleasant fashion, while, to mend matters, the old bark began to roll and tumble about in an aimless, drunken sort of way, the result of a new cross swell rolling up from the south-westward. As the stuff was gained, it was poured into large tanks in the blubber-room, the quantity being too great to be held by the try-pots at once. Twenty-five barrels of this clear, wax-like substance were baled from that case; and when at last it was lowered a little, and cut away from its supports, it was impossible to help thinking that much was still remaining within which we, with such rude means, were unable to save. Then came the task of cutting up the junk. Layer after layer, eight to ten inches thick, was sliced off, cut into suitable pieces, and passed into the tanks. So full was the matter of spermaceti that one could take a piece as large as one's head in the hands, and squeeze it like a sponge, expressing the spermaceti in showers, until nothing remained but a tiny ball of fibre. All this soft, pulpy mass was held together by walls of exceedingly tough, gristly integument ('white horse'), which was as difficult to cut as gutta-percha, and, but for the peculiar texture, not at all unlike it.

When we had finished separating the junk, there was nearly a foot of oil on deck in the waist, and uproarious was the laughter when some hapless individual, losing his balance, slid across the deepest part of the accumulation.

The lower jaw of this whale measured exactly nineteen feet in length from the opening of the mouth, or, say the last of the teeth, to the point, and carried twenty-eight teeth on each side. For the

time, it was hauled aft out of the way, and secured to the lash-rail. The subsequent proceedings were just the same as before described, only more so. For a whole week our labours continued, and when they were over we had stowed below a hundred and forty-six barrels of mingled oil and spermaceti, or fourteen and a half tuns.

It was really a pleasant sight to see Abner receiving, as if being invested with an order of merit, the twenty pounds of tobacco to which he was entitled. Poor fellow! he felt as if at last he were going to be thought a little of, and treated a little better. He brought his bounty forrard, and shared it out as far as it would go with the greatest delight and good nature possible. Whatever he might have been thought of aft, certainly, for the time, he was a very important personage forrard; even the Portuguese, who were inclined to be jealous of what they considered an infringement of their rights, were mollified by the generosity shown.

After every sign of the operations had been cleared away, the jaw was brought out, and the teeth extracted with a small tackle. They were set solidly into a hard white gum, which had to be cut away all around them before they would come out. When cleaned of the gum, they were headed up in a small barrel of brine. The great jaw-pans were sawn off, and placed at the disposal of anybody who wanted pieces of bone for 'scrimshaw,' or carved work. This is a very favourite pastime on board whalers, though, in ships such as ours, the crew have little opportunity for doing anything, hardly any leisure during daylight being allowed. But our carpenter was a famous workman at 'scrimshaw,' and he started half a dozen walking-sticks forthwith. A favourite design is to carve the bone into the similitude of a rope, with 'worming' of smaller line along its lays. A handle is carved out of a whale's tooth, and insets of balcen, silver, cocoa-tree, or ebony, give variety and finish. The tools used are of the roughest. Some old files, softened in the fire, and filed into grooves something like saw-teeth, are most used; but old knives, sail-needles, and chisels are pressed into service. The work turned out would, in many cases, take a very high place in an exhibition of turnery, though never a lathe was near it. Of course, a long time is taken over it, especially the polishing, which is done with oil and whiting, if it can be got—powdered pumice if it cannot. I once had an elaborate pastry-cutter carved out of six whale's teeth, which I purchased for a pound of tobacco from a seaman of the *Coral* whaler, and afterwards sold in Dunedin, New Zealand, for £2 10s., the purchaser being decidedly of opinion that he had a bargain.

## *Our First Calling-place*

PERHAPS it may hastily be assumed, from the large space already devoted to fishing operations of various kinds, that the subject will not bear much more dealing with, if my story is to avoid being monotonous. But I beg to assure you, dear reader, that while of course I have most to say in connection with the business of the voyage, nothing is farther from my plan than to neglect the very interesting portion of our cruise which relates to visiting strange, out-of-the-way corners of the world. If — which I earnestly deprecate — the description hitherto given of sperm whale-fishing and its adjuncts be found not so interesting as could be wished, I cry you mercy. I have been induced to give more space to it because it has been systematically avoided in the works upon whale-fishing before mentioned, which, as I have said, were not intended for popular reading. True, neither may my humble tome become popular either; but, if it does not, no one will be so disappointed as the author.

We had made but little progress during the week of oil manufacture, very little attention being paid to the sails while that work was about; but, as the south-east trades blew steadily, we did not remain stationary altogether. So that the following week saw us on the south side of the tropic of Capricorn, the south-east trade done, and the dirty weather and variable squalls, which nearly always precede the 'westerlies,' making our lives a burden to us. Here, however, we were better off than in an ordinary merchantman, where doldrums are enough to drive you mad. The one object being to get along, it is incessant 'pull-y-haul-y,' setting and taking in sail, in order, on the one hand, to lose no time, and, on the other, to lose no sails. Now, with us, whenever the weather was doubtful or squally-looking, we shortened sail, and kept it fast till better weather came along, being quite careless whether we made one mile a day or one hundred. But just because nobody took any notice of our progress as the days passed, we were occasionally startled to find how far we had really got. This was certainly the case with all of us forward, even to me who had some experience, so well used had I now become to the leisurely way of getting along. To the laziest of ships, however, there comes occasionally a time when the bustling, hurrying wind will take no denial, and you've got to 'git up an' git,' as the Yanks put it. Such a time succeeded our 'batterfanging' about, after losing the trades. We got hold of a westerly wind that, commencing quietly, gently,

steadily, taking two or three days before it gathered force and volume, strengthened at last into a stern, settled gale that would brook no denial, to face which would have been misery indeed. To vessels bound east it came as a boon and blessing, for it would be a crawler that could not reel off her two hundred and fifty miles a day before the push of such a breeze. Even the *Cachalot* did her one hundred and fifty, pounding and bruising the ill-used sea in her path, and spreading before her broad bows a far-reaching area of snowy foam, while her wake was as wide as any two ordinary ships ought to make. Five or six times a day the flying East India or colonial-bound English ships, under every stitch of square sail, would appear as tiny specks on the horizon astern, come up with us, pass like a flash, and fade away ahead, going at least two knots to our one. I could not help feeling a bit home-sick and tired of my present surroundings, in spite of their interest, when I saw those beautiful ocean-flyers devouring the distance which lay before them, and reflected that in little more than one month most of them would be discharging in Melbourne, Sydney, Calcutta, or some other equally distant port, while we should probably be dodging about in our present latitude a little farther east.

After a few days of our present furious rate of speed, I came on deck one morning, and instantly recognized an old acquaintance. Right ahead, looking nearer than I had ever seen it before, rose the towering mass of Tristan d'Acunha, while farther away, but still visible, lay Nightingale and Inaccessible Islands. Their aspect was familiar, for I had sighted them on nearly every voyage I had made round the Cape, but I had never seen them so near as this. There was a good deal of excitement among us, and no wonder. Such a break in the monotony of our lives as we were about to have was enough to turn our heads. Afterwards, we learned to view these matters in a more philosophic light; but now, being new and galled by the yoke, it was a different thing. Near as the island seemed, it was six hours before we got near enough to distinguish objects on shore. I have seen the top of Tristan peeping through a cloud nearly a hundred miles away, for its height is tremendous. St. Helena looks a towering, scowling mass when you approach it closely; but Tristan d'Acunha is far more imposing, its savage looking cliffs seeming to sternly forbid the venturesome voyage any nearer familiarity with their frowning fastnesses. Long before we came within working distance of the settlement, we were continually passing broad patches of kelp (*fucus gigantea*), whose great leaves and cable-laid stems made quite reef-like breaks in the heaving waste of restless sea. Very different indeed were these patches of marine growth from the elegant wreaths of the Gulf weed with which parts of the North Atlantic are so thickly covered



Their colour was deep brown, almost black in some cases, and the size of many of the leaves amazing, being four to five feet long, by a foot wide, with stalks as thick as one's arm. They have their origin around these storm-beaten rocks, which lie scattered thinly over the immense area of the Southern Ocean, whence they are torn, in masses like those we saw, by every gale, and sent wandering round the world.

When we arrived within about three miles of the landing-place, we saw a boat coming off, so we immediately hove-to and awaited her arrival. There was no question of anchoring; indeed, there seldom is in these vessels, unless they are going to make a long stay, for they are past masters in the art of 'standing off and on.' The boat came alongside—a big, substantially-built craft of the whale-boat type, but twice the size—manned by ten sturdy-looking fellows, as unkempt and wild-looking as any pirates. They were evidently put to great straits for clothes, many curious makeshifts being noticeable in their rig, while it was so patched with every conceivable kind of material that it was impossible to say which was the original or 'standing part.' They brought with them potatoes, onions, a few stunted cabbages, some fowls, and a couple of good-sized pigs, at the sight of which good things our eyes glistened and our mouths watered. Alas! none of the cargo of that boat ever reached *our* hungry stomachs. We were not surprised, having anticipated that every bit of provision would be monopolized by our masters; but of course we had no means of altering such a state of things.

The visitors had the same tale to tell that seems universal—bad trade, hard times, nothing doing. How very familiar it seemed, to be sure. Nevertheless, it could not be denied that their sole means of communication with the outer world, as well as market for their goods, the calling whale-ships, were getting fewer and fewer every year; so that their outlook was not, it must be confessed, particularly bright. But their wants are few, beyond such as they can themselves supply. Groceries and clothes, the latter especially, as the winters are very severe, are almost the only needs they require to be supplied with from without. They spoke of the 'Cape' as if it were only across the way, the distance separating them from that wonderful place being over thirteen hundred miles in reality. Very occasionally a schooner from Capetown does visit them; but, as the seals are almost exterminated, there is less and less inducement to make the voyage.

Like almost all the southern islets, this group has been in its time the scene of a wonderfully productive seal-fishery. It used to be customary for whaling and sealing vessels to land a portion of their crews, and leave them to accumulate a store of seal-skins

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

and oil, while the ships cruised the surrounding seas for whales, which were exceedingly numerous, both 'right' and sperm varieties. In those days there was no monotony of existence in these islands, ships were continually coming and going, and the islanders prospered exceedingly. When they increased beyond the capacity of the islands to entertain them, a portion migrated to the Cape, while many of the men took service in the whale-ships, for which they were eminently suited.

They are, as might be expected, a hybrid lot, the women all mulattoes, but intensely English in their views and loyalty. Since the visit of H.M.S. *Galatea*, in August, 1867, with the Duke of Edinburgh on board, this sentiment had been intensified, and the little collection of thatched cottages, nameless till then, was called Edinburgh, in honour of the illustrious voyager. They breed cattle, a few sheep, and pigs, although the sheep thrive but indifferently for some reason or another. Poultry they have in large numbers, so that, could they command a market, they would do very well.

The steep cliffs, rising from the sea for nearly a thousand feet, often keep their vicinity in absolute calm, although a heavy gale may be raging on the other side of the island, and it would be highly dangerous for any navigator not accustomed to such a neighbourhood to get too near them. The immense rollers setting inshore, and the absence of wind combined, would soon carry a vessel up against the beetling crags, and letting go an anchor would not be of the slightest use, since the bottom, being of massive boulders, affords no holding ground at all. All round the island the kelp grows thickly, so thickly indeed as to make a boat's progress through it difficult. This, however, is very useful in one way here, as we found. Wanting more supplies, which were to be had cheap, we lowered a couple of boats, and went ashore after them. On approaching the black, pebbly beach which formed the only landing-place it appeared, as if getting ashore would be a task of no ordinary danger and difficulty. The swell seemed to culminate as we neared the beach, lifting the boats at one moment high in air, and at the next lowering them into a green valley, from whence nothing could be seen but the surrounding watery summits. Suddenly we entered the belt of kelp, which extended for perhaps a quarter of a mile seaward, and, lo! a transformation indeed. Those loose, waving fronds of flexible weed, though swayed hither and thither by every ripple, were able to arrest the devastating rush of the gigantic swell, so that the task of landing, which had looked so terrible, was one of the easiest. Once in among the kelp, although we could hardly use the oars, the water was quite smooth and tranquil. The islanders collected on the beach, and guided us

to the best spot for landing, the huge boulders, heaped in many places, being ugly impediments to a boat.

We were as warmly welcomed as if we had been old friends, and hospitable attentions were showered upon us from every side. The people were noticeably well-behaved, and, although there was something Crusoe-like in their way of living, their manners and conversation were distinctly good. A rude plenty was evident, there being no lack of good food—fish, fowl, and vegetables. The grassy plateau on which the village stands is a sort of shelf jutting out from the mountain-side, the mountain being really the whole island. Steep roads were hewn out of the solid rock, leading, as we were told, to the cultivated terraces above. These reached an elevation of about a thousand feet. Above all towered the great, dominating peak, the summit lost in the clouds eight or nine thousand feet above. The rock-hewn roads and cultivated land certainly gave the settlement an old-established appearance, which was not surprising, seeing that it has been inhabited for more than a hundred years. I shall always bear a grateful recollection of the place, because my host gave me what I had long been a stranger to—a good, old-fashioned English dinner of roast beef and baked potatoes. He apologized for having no plum-pudding to crown the feast. ‘But, you see,’ he said, ‘we kaint grow no corn hyar, and we’m clean run out ov flour; hev ter make out on taters ’s best we kin.’ I sincerely sympathized with him on the lack of bread-stuff among them, and wondered no longer at the avidity with which they had munched our flinty biscuits on first coming aboard. His wife, a buxom, motherly woman of about fifty, of dark, olive complexion, but good features, was kindness itself; and their three youngest children, who were at home, could not, in spite of repeated warnings and threats, keep their eyes off me, as if I had been some strange animal dropped from the moon. I felt very unwilling to leave them so soon, but time was pressing, the stores we had come for were all ready to ship, and I had to tear myself away from these kindly entertainers. I declare, it seemed like parting with old friends; yet our acquaintance might have been measured by minutes, so brief it had been. The mate had purchased a fine bullock, which had been slaughtered and cut up for us with great celerity, four or five dozen fowls (alive), four or five sacks of potatoes, eggs, etc., so that we were heavily laden for the return journey to the ship. My friend had kindly given me a large piece of splendid cheese, for which I was unable to make him any return, being simply clad in a shirt and pair of trousers, neither of which necessary garments could be spared.

With hearty cheers from the whole population, we shoved off and ploughed through the kelp seaweed again. When we got clear

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

of it, we found the swell heavier than when we had come, and a rough journey back to the ship was the result. But, to such boatmen as we were, that was a trifle hardly worth mentioning, and after an hour's hard pull we got alongside again, and transhipped our precious cargo. The weather being threatening, we at once hauled off the land and out to sea, as night was falling and we did not wish to be in so dangerous a vicinity any longer than could be helped in stormy weather. Altogether, a most enjoyable day, and one that I have ever since had a pleasant recollection of.

By daybreak next morning the islands were out of sight, for the wind had risen to a gale, which, although we carried little sail, drove us along before it some seven or eight knots an hour.

Two days afterwards we caught another whale of medium size, making us fifty-four barrels of oil. As nothing out of the ordinary course marked the capture, it is unnecessary to do more than allude to it in passing, except to note that the honours were all with Goliath. He happened to be close to the whale when it rose, and immediately got fast. So dexterous and swift were his actions that before any of the other boats could 'chip in' he had his fish 'fin out,' the whole affair from start to finish only occupying a couple of hours. We were now in the chosen haunts of the great albatross, Cape pigeons, and Cape hens, but never in my life had I imagined such a concourse of them as now gathered around us. When we lowered there might have been perhaps a couple of dozen birds in sight, but no sooner was the whale dead than from out of the great void around they began to drift towards us. Before we had got him fast alongside, the numbers of that feathered host were incalculable. They surrounded us until the sea surface was like a plain of snow, and their discordant cries were deafening. With the exception of one peculiar-looking bird, which has received from whalers the inelegant name of 'stinker,' none of them attempted to alight upon the body of the dead monster. This bird, however, somewhat like a small albatross, but of dirty-grey colour, and with a peculiar excrescence on his beak, boldly took his precarious place upon the carcass, and at once began to dig into the blubber. He did not seem to make much impression, but he certainly tried hard.

It was dark before we got our prize secured by the fluke-chain, so that we could not commence operations before morning. That night it blew hard, and we got an idea of the strain these vessels are sometimes subjected to. Sometimes the ship rolled one way and the whale another, being divided by a big sea, the wrench at the fluke-chain, as the two masses fell apart down different hollows, making the vessel quiver from truck to keelson as if she was being torn asunder. Then we would come together again with a crash and a shock that almost threw everybody out of their bunks. Many

an earnest prayer did I breathe that the chain would prove staunch, for what sort of a job it would be to go after that whale during the night, should he break loose, I could only faintly imagine. But all our gear was of the very best; no thieving ship-chandler had any hand in supplying our outfit with shoddy rope and faulty chain, only made to sell, and ready at the first call made upon it to carry away and destroy half a dozen valuable lives. There was one coil of rope on board which the skipper had bought for cordage on the previous voyage from a homeward-bound English ship, and it was the butt of all the officers' scurrilous remarks about Britishers and their gear. It was never used but for rope-yarns, being cut up in lengths, and untwisted for the ignominious purpose of tying things up—'hardly good enough for that,' was the verdict upon it.

Tired as we all were, very little sleep came to us that night—we were barely seasoned yet to the exigencies of a whaler's life—but afterwards I believe nothing short of dismasting or running the ship ashore would wake us, once we got to sleep. In the morning we commenced operations in a howling gale of wind, which placed the lives of the officers on the 'cutting in' stage in great danger. The wonderful seaworthy qualities of our old ship shone brilliantly now. When an ordinary modern-built sailing-ship would have been making such weather of it as not only to drown anybody about the deck, but making it impossible to keep your footing anywhere without holding on, we were enabled to cut in this whale. True, the work was terribly exhausting and decidedly dangerous, but it was not impossible, for it was done. By great care and constant attention, the whole work of cutting in and trying out was got through without a single accident; but had another whale turned up to continue the trying time, I am fully persuaded that some of us would have gone under from sheer fatigue. For there was no mercy shown. All that I have ever read of 'putting the slaves through for all they were worth' on the plantations was fully realized here, and our worthy skipper must have been a lineal descendant of the doughty Simon Legree.

The men were afraid to go on to the sick-list. Nothing short of total inability to continue would have prevented them from working, such was the terror with which that man had inspired us all. It may be said that we were a pack of cowards, who, without the courage to demand better treatment, deserved all we got. While admitting that such a conclusion is quite a natural one at which to arrive, I must deny its truth. There were men in that fore-castle as good citizens and as brave fellows as you would wish to meet—men who in their own sphere would have commanded and obtained respect. But under the painful and abnormal circumstances in which they found themselves—beaten and driven like.

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

dogs while in the throes of sea-sickness, half starved and hopeless, their spirit had been so broken, and they were so kept down to that sad level by the display of force, aided by deadly weapons aft, that no other condition could be expected for them but that of broken-hearted slaves. My own case was many degrees better than that of the other whites, as I have before noted; but I was perfectly well aware that the slightest attempt on my part to show that I resented our common treatment would meet with the most brutal repression, and, in addition, I might look for a dreadful time of it for the rest of the voyage.

The memory of that week of misery is so strong upon me even now that my hand trembles almost to preventing me from writing about it. Weak and feeble do the words seem as I look at them, making me wish for the fire and force of Carlyle or Macaulay to portray our unnecessary sufferings.

Like all other earthly ills, however, they came to an end, at least for a time, and I was delighted to note that we were getting to the northward again. In making the outward passage round the Cape, it is necessary to go well south, in order to avoid the great westerly set of the Agulhas current, which for ever sweeps steadily round the southern extremity of the African continent at an average rate of three or four miles an hour. To homeward-bound ships this is a great boon. No matter what the weather may be—a stark calm or a gale of wind right on end in your teeth—that vast, silent river in the sea steadily bears you on at the same rate in the direction of home. It is perfectly true that with a gale blowing across the set of this great current, one of the very ugliest combinations of broken waves is raised; but who cares for that, when he knows that, as long as the ship holds together, some seventy or eighty miles per day nearer home must be placed to her credit? In like manner, it is of the deepest comfort to know that, storm or calm, fair or foul, the current of time, unhasting, unresting, bears us on to the goal that we shall surely reach—the haven of unbroken rest.

Not the least of the minor troubles on board the *Cachalot* was the uncertainty of our destination; we never knew where we were going. It may seem a small point, but it is really not so unimportant as a landsman might imagine. On an ordinary passage, certain well-known signs are as easily read by the seaman as if the ship's position were given out to him every day. Every alteration of the course signifies some point of the journey reached, some well-known track entered upon, and every landfall made becomes a new departure from whence to base one's calculations, which, rough as they are, rarely err more than a few days.

Say, for instance, you are bound for Calcutta. The first of the north-east trades will give a fair idea of your latitude being about

the edge of the tropics somewhere, or say from 20° to 25° N., whether you have sighted any of the islands or not. Then away you go before the wind down towards the Equator, the approach to which is notified by the loss of the trade and the dirty, changeable weather of the 'doldrums.' That weary bit of work over, along come the south-east trades, making you brace 'sharp up,' and sometimes driving you uncomfortably near the Brazilian coast. Presently more 'doldrums,' with a good deal more wind in them than in the 'variables' of the line latitude. The brave 'westerly' will come along by-and-by and release you, and, with a staggering press of sail carried to the reliable gale, away you go for the long stretch of a hundred degrees or so eastward. You will very likely sight Tristan d'Acunha or Gough Island; but, if not, the course will keep you fairly well informed of your longitude, since most ships make more or less of a great circle track. Instead of steering due East for the whole distance, they make for some southerly latitude by running along the arc of a great circle, then run due east for a thousand miles or so before gradually working north again. These alterations in the courses tell the foremast hand nearly all he wants to know, slight as they are. You will most probably sight Amsterdam Island or St. Paul's in about 77° E.; but whether you do or not, the big change made in the course, to say nothing of the difference in the weather and temperature, say loudly that your long easterly run is over, and you are bound to the northward again. Soon the south-east trades will take you gently in hand, and waft you pleasurably upward to the line again, unless you should be so unfortunate as to meet one of the devastating meteors known as 'cyclones' in its gyration across the Indian Ocean. After losing the trade, which signals your approach to the line once more, your guides fluctuate muchly with the time of year. But it may be broadly put that the change of the monsoon in the Bay of Bengal is beastliness unadulterated, and the south-west monsoon itself, though a fair wind for getting to your destination, is worse, if possible. Still, having got that far, you are able to judge pretty nearly when, in the ordinary course of events, you will arrive at Saugor, and get a tug for the rest of the journey.

But on this strange voyage I was quite as much in the dark concerning our approximate position as any of the chaps who had never seen salt water before they viewed it from the bad eminence of the *Cachalot's* deck. Of course, it was evident that we were bound eastward, but whether to the Indian seas or to the South Pacific, none knew but the skipper, and perhaps the mate. I say 'perhaps' advisedly. In any well-regulated merchant ship there is an invariable routine of observations performed by both captain and chief officer, except in very big vessels, where the second mate is

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appointed navigating officer. The two men work out their reckoning independently of each other, and compare the result, so that an excellent check upon the accuracy of the positions found is thereby afforded. Here, however, there might not have been, as far as appearances went, a navigator in the ship except the captain, if it be not a misuse of terms to call him a navigator. If the test be ability to take a ship round the world, poking into every undescribed, out-of-the-way corner you can think of, and return home again without damage to the ship of any kind except by the unavoidable perils of the sea, then doubtless he *was* a navigator, and a ripe, good one. But anything cruder than the 'rule-of-thumb' way in which he found his positions, or more out of date than his 'hog-yoke,' or quadrant, I have never seen. I suppose we carried a chronometer, though I never saw it or heard the cry of 'stop,' which usually accompanies a.m. or p.m. 'sights' taken for longitude. He used sometimes to make a deliberate sort of haste below after taking a sight, when he may have been looking at a chronometer perhaps. What I do know about his procedure is, that he always used a very rough method of equal altitudes, which would make a mathematician stare and gasp; that his nautical almanac was a ten-cent one published by some speculative optician in New York; that he never worked up a 'dead reckoning;' and that the extreme limit of time that he took to work out his observations was ten minutes. In fact, all our operations in seamanship or navigation were run on the same happy-go-lucky principle. If it was required to 'tack' ship, there was no formal parade and preparation for the manœuvre, not even as much as would be made in a Goole billy-boy. Without any previous intimation, the helm would be put down, and round she would come, the yards being trimmed by whoever happened to be nearest to the braces. The old tub seemed to like it that way, for she never missed stays or exhibited any of that unwillingness to do what she was required that is such a frequent characteristic of merchantmen. Even getting under way or coming to an anchor was unattended by any of the fuss and bother from which those important evolutions ordinarily appear inseparable.

To my great relief, we saw no more whales of the kind we were after during our passage round the Cape. The weather we were having was splendid for making a passage, but to be dodging about among those immense rollers, or towed athwart them by a wounded whale, in so small a craft as one of our whale-boats, did not have any attractions for me. There was little doubt in any of our minds that, if whales were seen, off we must go while daylight lasted, let the weather be what it might. So when one morning I went to the wheel, to find the course N.N.E. instead of E. by N., it may be taken for granted that the change was a considerable relief to me.

## A VISIT TO SOME STRANGE PLACES

It was now manifest that we were bound up into the Indian Ocean, although of course I knew nothing of the position of the districts where whales were to be looked for. Gradually we crept northward, the weather improving every day as we left the 'roaring forties' astern. While thus making nothing we had several fine catches of porpoises, and saw many rorquals, but sperm whales appeared to have left the locality. However, the 'old man' evidently knew what he was about, as we were not now cruising, but making a direct passage for some definite place.

At last we sighted land, which, from the course which we had been steering, might have been somewhere on the east coast of Africa, but for the fact that it was right ahead, while we were pointing at the time about N.N.W. By-and-by I came to the conclusion that it must be the southern extremity of Madagascar, Cape St. Mary, and, by dint of the closest attention to every word I heard uttered while at the wheel by the officers, found that my surmise was correct. We skirted this point pretty closely, heading to the westward, and, when well clear of it, bore up to the northward again for the Mozambique Channel. Another surprise. The very idea of *whaling* in the Mozambique Channel seemed too ridiculous to mention; yet here we were, guided by a commander who, whatever his faults, was certainly most keen in his attention to business, and the unlikeliest man imaginable to take the ship anywhere unless he anticipated a profitable return for his visit.

## 10

### *A Visit to some Strange Places*

We had now entered upon what promised to be the most interesting part of our voyage. As a commercial speculation, I have to admit that the voyage was to me a matter of absolute indifference. Never, from the first week of my being on board, had I cherished any illusions upon that score, for it was most forcibly impressed on my mind that, whatever might be the measure of success attending our operations, no one of the crew forward could hope to benefit by it. The share of profits was so small, and the time taken to earn it so long, such a number of clothes were worn out and destroyed by us, only to be replaced from the ship's slop-chest at high prices, that I had quite resigned myself to the prospect of leaving the vessel in debt, whenever that desirable event might happen. Since, therefore, I had never made it a practice to repine at the inevitable, and make myself unhappy by the contemplation of misfortunes I was powerless to prevent, I tried to interest myself as far as was possible in gathering information, although at that time I had no

idea, beyond a general thirst for knowledge, that what I was now learning would ever be of any service to me. Yet I had been dull indeed not to have seen how unique were the opportunities I was now enjoying for observation of some of the least known and understood aspects of the ocean world and its wonderful inhabitants, to say nothing of visits to places unvisited, except by such free lances as we were, and about which so little is really known.

The weather of the Mozambique Channel was fairly good, although subject to electric storms of the most terrible aspect, but perfectly harmless. On the second evening after rounding Cape St. Mary, we were proceeding, as usual, under very scanty sail, rather enjoying the mild, balmy air, scent-laden, from Madagascar. The moon was shining in tropical splendour, paling the lustre of the attendant stars, and making the glorious Milky Way but a faint shadow of its usual resplendent road. Gradually from the westward there arose a murky mass of cloud, fringed at its upper edges with curious tinted tufts of violet, orange, and crimson. These colours were not brilliant, but plainly visible against the deep blue sky. Slowly and solemnly the intruding gloom overspread the sweet splendour of the shining sky, creeping like a death-shadow over a dear face, and making the most talkative feel strangely quiet and ill at ease. As the pall of thick darkness blotted out the cool light, it seemed to descend until at last we were completely over-canopied by a dome of velvety black, seemingly low enough to touch the mast-heads. A belated sea-bird's shrill scream but emphasized the deep silence which lent itself befittingly to the solemnity of nature. Presently thin suggestions of light, variously tinted, began to thread the inky mass. These grew brighter and more vivid, until at last, in fantastic contortions, they appeared to rend the swart concave asunder, revealing through the jagged clefts a lurid waste of the most intensely glowing fire. The coming and going of these amazing brightnesses, combined with the Egyptian dark between, was completely blinding. So loaded was the still air with electricity that from every point aloft pale flames streamed upward, giving the ship the appearance of a huge candelabrum with innumerable branches. One of the hands, who had been ordered aloft on some errand of securing a loose end, presented a curious sight. He was bareheaded, and from his hair the all-pervading fluid arose, lighting up his features, which were ghastly beyond description. When he lifted his hand, each separate finger became at once an additional point from which light streamed. There was no thunder, but a low hissing and a crackling which did not amount to noise, although distinctly audible to all. Sensations most unpleasant of pricking and general irritation were felt by every one, according to their degree of susceptibility.

After about an hour of this state of things, a low moaning, of thunder was heard, immediately followed by a few drops of rain large as dollars. The mutterings and grumbings increased until, with one peal that made the ship tremble as though she had just struck a rock at full speed, down came the rain. The windows of heaven were opened, and no man might stand against the steaming flood that descended by thousands of tons per minute. How long it continued, I cannot say; probably, in its utmost fierceness, not more than half an hour. Then it slowly abated, clearing away as it did so the accumulation of gloom overhead, until, before midnight had struck, all the heavenly host were shedding their beautiful brilliancy upon us again with apparently increased glory, while the freshness and invigorating feel of the air was inexpressibly delightful.

We did not court danger by hugging too closely any of the ugly reefs and banks that abound in this notably difficult strait, but gave them all a respectfully wide birth. It was a feature of our navigation that, unless we had occasion to go near any island or reef for fishing or landing purposes, we always kept a safe margin of distance away, which probably accounts for our continued immunity from accident while in tortuous waters. Our anchors and cables were, however, always kept ready for use now, in case of an unsuspected current or sudden storm; but beyond that precaution, I could see little or no difference in the manner of our primitive navigation.

We met with no 'luck' for some time, and the faces of the harpooners grew daily longer, the great heat of those sultry waters trying all tempers sorely. But Captain Slocum knew his business, and his scowling, impassive face showed no sign of disappointment, or indeed any other emotion, as day by day we crept farther north. At last we sighted the stupendous peak of Comoro mountain, which towers to nearly nine thousand feet from the little island which gives its name to the Comoro group of four. On that same day a school of medium-sized sperm whales were sighted, which appeared to be almost of a different race to those with which we had hitherto had dealings. They were exceedingly fat and lazy, moving with the greatest deliberation, and, when we rushed in among them, appeared utterly bewildered and panic-stricken, knowing not which way to flee. Like a flock of frightened sheep they huddled together, aimlessly wallowing in each other's way, while we harpooned them with the greatest ease and impunity. Even the 'old man' himself lowered the fifth boat, leaving the ship to the carpenter, cooper, cook, and steward, and coming on the scene as if determined to make a field-day of the occasion. He was no 'slouch' at the business either. Not that there was much occasion

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'GACHALOT'

an opportunity to exhibit any prowess. The record of the day's proceedings would be as tame as to read of a day's work in a slaughter-house. Suffice it to say, that we actually killed six whales, none of whom were less than fifty barrels, no boat ran out more than one hundred fathoms of line, neither was a bomb-lance used. Not the slightest casualty occurred to any of the boats, and the whole work of destruction was over in less than four hours.

Then came the trouble. The fish were, of course somewhat widely separated when they died, and the task of collecting all those immense carcasses was one of no ordinary magnitude. Had it not been for the wonderfully skilful handling of the ship, the task would, I should think, have been impossible, but the way in which she was worked compelled the admiration of anybody who knew what handling a ship meant. Still, with all the ability manifested, it was five hours after the last whale died before we had gathered them all alongside, bringing us to four o'clock in the afternoon.

A complete day under that fierce blaze of the tropical sun, without other refreshment than an occasional furtive drink of tepid water, had reduced us to a pitiable condition of weakness, so much so that the skipper judged it prudent, as soon as the fluke-chains were passed, to give us a couple of hours' rest. As soon as the sun had set we were all turned to again, three cressets were prepared, and by their blaze we toiled the whole night through. Truth compels me to state, though, that none of us foremast hands had nearly such heavy work as the officers on the stage. What they had to do demanded special knowledge and skill; but it was also terribly hard work, constant and unremitting, while we at the windlass had many a short spell between the lifting of the pieces. Even the skipper took a hand, for the first time, and right manfully did he do his share.

By the first streak of dawn, three of the whales had been stripped of their blubber, and five heads were bobbing astern at the ends of as many hawsers. The sea all round presented a wonderful sight. There must have been thousands of sharks gathered to the feast, and their incessant incursions through the phosphorescent water wove a dazzling network of brilliant tracks which made the eyes ache to look upon. A short halt was called for breakfast, which was greatly needed, and, thanks to the cook, was a thoroughly good one. He—blessings on him!—had been busy fishing, as we drifted slowly, with savoury pieces of whale-beef for bait, and the result was a mess of fish which would have gladdened the heart of an epicure. Our hunger appeased, it was 'turn to' again, for there was now no time to be lost. The fierce heat soon acts upon the carcass of a dead whale, generating an immense volume of gas within it, which, in a wonderfully short space of time, turns the flesh putrid

and renders the blubber so rotten that it cannot be lifted, nor, if it could, would it be of any value. So it was no wonder that our haste was great, or that the august arbiter of our destinies himself condescended to take his place among the toilers. By nightfall the whole of our catch was on board, excepting such toll as the hungry hordes of sharks had levied upon it in transit. A goodly number of them had paid the penalty of their rapacity with their lives, for often one would wriggle his way right up on to the reeking carcass, and, seizing a huge fragment of blubber, strive with might and main to tear it away. Then the lethal spade would drop upon his soft crown, cleaving it to the jaws, and with one flap of his big tail he would loose his grip, roll over and over, and sink, surrounded by a writhing crowd of his fellows, by whom he was speedily reduced into digestible fragments.

The condition of the *Cachalot's* deck was now somewhat akin to chaos. From the cabin door to the try-works there was hardly an inch of available space, and the oozing oil kept some of us continually baling it up, lest it should leak out through the interstices in the bulwarks. In order to avoid a breakdown, it became necessary to divide the crew into six-hour watches, as although the work was exceedingly urgent on account of the weather, there were evident signs that some of the crew were perilously near giving in. So we got rest none too soon, and the good effects of it were soon apparent. The work went on with much more celerity than one would have thought possible, and soon the lumbered-up decks began to resume their normal appearance.

As if to exasperate the 'old man' beyond measure, on the third day of our operations a great school of sperm whales appeared, disporting all around the ship, apparently conscious of our helplessness to interfere with them. Notwithstanding our extraordinary haul, Captain Slocum went black with impotent rage, and, after glowering at the sportive monsters, beat a retreat below, unable to bear the sight any longer. During his absence we had a rare treat. The whole school surrounded the ship, and performed some of the strangest evolutions imaginable. As if instigated by one common impulse, they all elevated their massive heads above the surface of the sea, and remained for some time in that position, solemnly bobbing up and down amid the glittering wavelets like movable boulders of black rock. Then, all suddenly reversed themselves, and, elevating their broad flukes in the air, commenced to beat them slowly and rhythmically upon the water, like so many machines. Being almost a perfect calm, every movement of the great mammals could be plainly seen; some of them even passed so near to us that we could see how the lower jaw hung down, while the animal was swimming in a normal position.

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For over an hour they thus paraded around us, and then, as if startled by some hidden danger, suddenly headed off to the westward, and in a few minutes were out of our sight.

We cruised in the vicinity of the Comoro Islands for two months, never quite out of sight of the mountain while the weather was clear. During the whole of that time we were never clear of oil on deck, one catch always succeeding another before there had been time to get cleared up. Eight hundred barrels of oil were added to our cargo, making the undisciplined hearts of all to whom whaling was a novel employment beat high with hopes of a speedy completion of the cargo, and consequent return. Poor innocents that we were! How could we know any better? According to Goliath, with whom I often had a friendly chat, this was quite out of the ordinary run to have such luck in the 'Channel.'

'Way back in de dark ages, w'en de whaleships war de pi'neers ob commerce, 'n dey wan't no worryin', poofity-plunkity steam-boats a-poundin' along, 'nough ter galley ebery whale clean cout ob dere skin, dey war plenty whaleships fill up in twelve, fifteen, twenty monf' after leabin' home. 'N er man hed his pick er places, too— didn' hab ter go moseyin erroun' like some ol' hobo lookin' fer day's work, 'n prayin' de good Lord not ter let um fine it. No, sah; foun yer China Sea, coas' Japan, on de line, off shore, Vasquez, 'mong de islan's, ohmos' anywhar, you couldn' hardly git way from 'em. Neow, I clar ter glory I kaint imagine war dey all gone ter, dough we bin cout only six seven monf' 'n got over tousan bar'l below. But I bin two year on er voy'ge and doan hardly see a sparm whale, much less catch one. But'— and here he whispered mysteriously— 'dish yer ole man's de bery debbil's own chile, 'n his farder lookin' after him well—dat's my 'pinion. Only yew keep yer head tight shut, an' nebber say er word, but keep er lookin', 'n sure's death you'll see.' This conversation made a deep and lasting impression upon me, for I had not before heard even so much as a murmur from an officer against the tyranny of the skipper. Some of the harpooners were fluent enough, too.

Yet I had often thought that his treatment of them, considering the strenuous nature of their toil, and the willingness with which they worked as long as they had an ounce of energy left, was worth at least a little kindness and courtesy on his part.

What the period may have been during which whales were plentiful here, I do not know, but it was now May, and for the last few days we had not seen a solitary spout of any kind. Preparations, very slight it is true, were made for departure; but before we left those parts we made an interesting call for water at Mohilla, one of the Comoro group, which brought out, in unmistakable fashion, the wonderful fund of local knowledge possessed by these



men. At the larger ports of Johanna and Mayotte there is a regular tariff of port charges, which are somewhat heavy, and no whaler would be so reckless as to incur these unless driven thereto by the necessity of obtaining provisions; otherwise, the islands offer great inducements to whaling captains to call, since none but men hopelessly mad would venture to desert in such places. That qualification is the chief one for any port to possess in the eyes of a whaling captain.

Our skipper, however, saw no necessity for entering any port. Running up under the lee of Mohilla, we followed the land along until we came to a tiny bight on the western side of the island, an insignificant inlet which no mariner in charge of a vessel like ours could be expected even to notice, unless he were surveying. The approaches to this tiny harbour (save the mark) were very forbidding. Ugly-looking rocks showed up here and there, the surf over them frequently blinding the whole entry. But we came along, in our usual leisurely fashion, under two topsails, spanker, and fore-topmast staysail, and took that ugly passage like a sailing barge entering the Medway. There was barely room to turn round when we got inside, but all sail had been taken off her except the spanker, so that her way was almost stopped by the time she was fairly within the harbour. Down went the anchor, and she was fast--anchored for the first time since leaving New Bedford seven months before. Here we were shut out entirely from the outer world, for I doubt greatly whether even a passing dhow could have seen us from seaward. We were not here for rest, however, but wood and water; so while one party was supplied with well-sharpened axes, and sent on shore to cut down such small trees as would serve our turn, another party was busily employed getting out a number of big casks for the serious business of watering. The cooper knocked off the second or quarter hoops from each of these casks, and drove them on again with two 'beckets' or loops of rope firmly jammed under each of them in such a manner that the loops were in line with each other on each side of the bung-hole. They were then lowered overboard, and a long rope rove through all the beckets. When this was done, the whole number of casks floated end to end, upright and secure. We towed them ashore to where, by the skipper's directions, at about fifty yards from high-water mark, a spring of beautiful water bubbled out of the side of a mass of rock, losing itself in a deep crevice below. Lovely ferns, rare orchids, and trailing plants of many kinds surrounded this fairy-like spot in the wildest profusion, making a tangle of greenery that we had considerable trouble to clear away. Having done so, we led a long canvas hose from the spot whence the water flowed down to the shore where the casks floated. The chief officer, with great inge-

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nality, rigged up an arrangement whereby the hose, which had a square mouth about a foot wide, was held up to the rock, saving us the labour of baling and filling by hand. So we were able to rest and admire at our ease the wonderful variety of beautiful plants which grew here so lavishly, unscen by mortal eye from one year's end to another. I have somewhere read that the Creator has delight in the beautiful work of His will, wherever it may be; and that while our egotism wonders at the waste of beauty, as we call it, there is no waste at all, since the Infinite Intelligence can dwell with complacency upon the glories of His handiwork, perfectly fulfilling their appointed ends.

All too soon the pleasant occupation came to an end. The long row of casks, filled to the brim and tightly bunged, were towed off by us to the ship, and ranged alongside. A tackle and pair of 'can-hooks' was overhauled to the water and hooked to a cask. 'Hoist away!' And as the cask rose, the beackets that had held it to the mother-rope were cut, setting it quite free to come on board, but leaving all the others still secure. In this way we took in several thousand gallons of water in a few hours, with a small expenditure of labour, free of cost; whereas, had we gone into Mayotte or Johanna, the water would have been bad, the price high, the labour great, with the chances of a bad visitation of fever in the bargain.

The woodmen had a much more arduous task. The only wood they could find, without cutting down big trees, which would have involved far too much labour in cutting up, was a kind of iron-wood, which, besides being very heavy, was so hard as to take pieces clean out of their axe-edges, when a blow was struck directly across the grain. As none of them were experts, the condition of their tools soon made their work very hard. But that they had taken several axes in reserve, it is doubtful whether they would have been able to get sufficient fuel for our purpose. When they pitched the wood off the rocks into the harbour, it sank immediately, giving them a great deal of trouble to fish it up again. Neither could they raft it as intended, but were compelled to load it into the boats and make several journeys to and fro before all they had cut was shipped. Altogether, I was glad that the wooding had not fallen to my share. On board the ship fishing had been going on steadily most of the day by a few hands told off for the purpose. The result of their sport was splendid, over two hundred-weight of fine fish of various sorts, but all eatable, having been gathered in.

We lay snugly anchored all night, keeping a bright look-out for any unwelcome visitors either from land or sea, for the natives are not to be trusted, neither do the Arab mongrels who cruise about those waters in their dhows bear any too good a reputation. We

## A VISIT TO SOME STRANGE PLACES

saw none, however, and at daylight we weighed and towed the ship out to sea with the boats, there being no wind. While busy at this uninteresting pastime, one of the boats slipped away, returning presently with a fine turtle, which they had surprised during his morning's nap. One of the amphibious Portuguese slipped over the boat's side as she neared the sleeping *Spharga*, and, diving deep, came up underneath him, seizing with crossed hands the two hind flippers, and, with a sudden, dexterous twist, turned the astonished creature over on his back. Thus rendered helpless, the turtle lay on the surface feebly waving his flippers, while his captor, gently treading water, held him in that position till the boat reached the pair and took them on board. It was a clever feat, neatly executed, as unlike the clumsy efforts I had before seen made with the same object as anything could possibly be.

After an hour's tow, we had got a good offing, and a light air springing up, we returned on board, hoisted the boats, and made sail to the northward again.

With the exception of the numerous native dhows that crept lazily about, we saw no vessels as we gradually drew out of the Mozambique Channel and stood away towards the Line. The part of the Indian Ocean in which we now found ourselves is much dreaded by merchantmen, who give it a wide berth on account of the numerous banks, islets, and dangerous currents with which it abounds. We, however, seemed quite at home here, pursuing the even tenor of our usual way without any special precautions being taken. A bright look-out we always kept, of course—none of your drowsy lolling about such as is all too common on the 'fo'lk's'le head' of many a fine ship, when, with lights half trimmed or not shown at all, she is ploughing along blindly at twelve knots or so an hour. No; while we were under way during daylight, four pairs of keen eyes kept incessant vigil a hundred feet above the deck, noting everything, even to a shoal of small fish, that crossed within the range of vision. At night we scarcely moved, but still a vigilant lookout was always kept both fore and aft, so that it would have been difficult for us to drift upon a reef unknowingly.

Creeping steadily northward, we passed the Cosmoledo group of atolls without paying them a visit, which was strange, as, from their appearance, no better fishing-ground would be likely to come in our way. They are little known, except to the wandering fishermen from Réunion and Rodriguez, who roam about these islets and reefs, seeking anything that may be turned into coin, from wrecks to turtle, and in nowise particular as to rights of ownership. When between the Cosmoledos and Astove, the next island to the northward, we sighted a 'solitary' cachalot one morning just as the day dawned. It was the first for some time—

nearly three weeks—and being all well seasoned to the work now, we obeyed the call to arms with great alacrity. Our friend was making a passage, turning neither to the right hand nor the left as he went. His risings and number of spouts while up, as well as the time he remained below, were as regular as the progress of a clock, and could be counted upon with quite as much certainty.

Bearing in mind, I suppose, the general character of the whales we had recently met with, only two boats were lowered to attack the new-comer, who, all unconscious of our coming, pursued his leisurely course unheeding.

We got a good weather-gage of him, and came flying on as usual, getting two irons planted in fine style. But a surprise awaited us. As we sheered up into the wind away from him, Louis shouted, 'Fightin' whale, sir; look out for de rush!' Look out, indeed? Small use in looking out when, hampered as we always were at first with the unshipping of the mast, we could do next to nothing to avoid him. Without any of the desperate flounderings generally indulged in on first feeling the iron, he turned upon us, and had it not been that he caught sight of the second mate's boat, which had just arrived, and turned his attentions to her, there would have been scant chance of any escape for us. Leaping half out of water, he made direct for our comrades with a vigour and ferocity marvellous to see, making it a no easy matter for them to avoid his tremendous rush. Our actions, at no time slow, were considerably hastened by this display of valour, so that before he could turn his attentions in our direction we were ready for him. 'Then ensued a really big fight, the first, in fact, of my experience, for none of the other whales had shown any serious determination to do us an injury, but had devoted all their energies to attempts at escape. So quick were the evolutions, and so savage the appearance of this fellow, that even our veteran mate looked anxious as to the possible result. Without attempting to 'sound,' the furious monster kept mostly below the surface; but whenever he rose, it was either to deliver a fearful blow with his tail, or, with jaws widespread, to try and bite one of our boats in half. Well was it for us that he was severely handicapped by a malformation of the lower jaw. At a short distance from the throat it turned off nearly at right angles to his body, the part that thus protruded sideways being deeply fringed with barnacles, and plated with big limpets.

Had it not been for this impediment, I verily believe he would have beaten us altogether. As it was, he worked us nearly to death with his ugly rushes. Once he delivered a sidelong blow with his tail, which, as we spun round, shore off the two oars on that side as if they had been carrots. At last the second mate got fast to him and then the character of the game changed again. Apparently

unwearied by his previous exertions, he now started off to windward at top speed, with the two boats sheering broadly out upon either side of his foaming wake. Doubtless because he himself was much fatigued, the mate allowed him to run at his will; without for the time attempting to haul any closer to him, and very grateful the short rest was to us. But he had not gone a couple of miles before he turned a complete somersault in the water, coming up *behind* us to rush off again in the opposite direction at undiminished speed. This move was a startler. For the moment it seemed as if both boats would be smashed like egg-shells against each other, or else that some of us would be impaled upon the long lances with which each boat's bow bristled. By what looked like a hand-breadth, we cleared each other, and the race continued. Up till now we had not succeeded in getting home a single lance, the foe was becoming warier, while the strain was certainly telling upon our nerves. So Mr. Count got out his bomb-gun, shouting at the same time to Mr. Cruce to do the same. They both hated these weapons, nor ever used them if they could help it; but what was to be done?

Our chief had hardly got his gun ready, before we came to almost a dead stop. All was silent for just a moment; then, with a roar like a cataract, up sprang the huge creature, head out, jaw wide open, coming direct for us. As coolly as if on the quarter-deck, the mate raised his gun, firing the bomb directly down the great livid cavern of a throat fronting him. Down went that mountainous head not six inches from us, but with a perfectly indescribable notion, a tremendous writhe, in fact; up flew the broad tail in air, and a blow which might have sufficed to stave in the side of the ship struck the second mate's boat fairly amidships. It was right before my eyes, not sixty feet away, and the sight will haunt me to my death. The tub oarsman was the poor German baker, about whom I have hitherto said nothing, except to note that he was one of the crew. That awful blow put an end summarily to all his earthly anxieties. As it shore obliquely through the centre of the boat, it drove his poor body right through her timbers—an undistinguishable bundle of what was an instant before a human being. The other members of the crew escaped the blow, and the harpooner managed to cut the line, so that for the present they were safe enough, clinging to the remains of their boat, unless the whale should choose to rush across them.

Happily, his rushing was almost over. The bomb fired by Mr. Count, with such fatal result to poor Bamberger, must have exploded right in the whale's throat. Whether his previous titanic efforts had completely exhausted him, or whether the bomb had broken his massive backbone, I do not know, of course, but he

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went into no flurry, dying as peacefully as his course had been furious. For the first time in my life, I had been face to face with a violent death, and I was quite stunned with the awfulness of the experience. Mechanically, as it seemed to me, we obeyed such orders as were given, but every man's thoughts were with the shipmate so suddenly dashed from amongst us. We never saw sign of him again.

While the ship was running down to us, another boat had gone to rescue the clinging crew of the shattered boat, for the whole drama had been witnessed from the ship, although they were not aware of the death of the poor German. When the sad news was told on board, there was a deep silence, all work being carried on so quietly that we seemed like a crew of dumb men. With a sentiment for which I should not have given our grim skipper credit, the stars and stripes were hoisted half-mast, telling the silent sky and moaning sea, sole witnesses besides ourselves, of the sudden departure from among us of our poor shipmate.

We got the whale cut in as usual without any incident worth mentioning, except that the peculiar shape of the jaw made it an object of great curiosity to all of us who were new to the whale-fishing. Such malformations are not very rare. They are generally thought to occur when the animal is young, and its bones soft; but whether done in fighting with one another, or in some more mysterious way, nobody knows. Cases have been known, I believe, where the deformed whale does not appear to have suffered from lack of food in consequence of his disability; but in each of the three instances which have come under my own notice, such was certainly not the case. These whales were what is termed by the whalers 'dry-skins;' that is, they were in poor condition, the blubber yielding less than half the usual quantity of oil. The absence of oil makes it very hard to cut up, and there is more work in one whale of this kind than in two whose blubber is rich and soft. Another thing which I have also noticed is, that these whales were much more difficult to tackle than others, for each of them gave us something special to remember them by. But I must not get ahead of my yarn.

The end of the week brought us up to the Aldabra Islands, or of the puzzles of the world. For here, in these tiny pieces of earth, surrounded by thousands of miles of sea, the nearest land a group of islets like unto them, is found the gigantic tortoise, and in only one other place in the wide world, the Galapagos group of islands in the South Pacific. How, or by what strange freak of Dame Nature these curious reptiles, sole survivals of another age, should come to be found in this lonely spot, is a deep mystery, and one not likely to be unfolded now. At any rate, there they are, looking as

if some of them might be coeval with Noah, so venerable and storm-beaten do they appear.

We made the island early on a Sunday morning, and, with the usual celerity, worked the vessel into the fine harbour, called, from one of the exploring ships, Euphrates Bay or Harbour. The anchor down, and everything made snug below and aloft, we were actually allowed a run ashore free from restraint. I could hardly believe my ears. We had got so accustomed to our slavery that liberty was become a mere name; we hardly knew what to do with it when we got it. However, we soon got used (in a very limited sense) to being our own masters, and, each following the bent of his inclinations, set out for a ramble. My companion and I had not gone far, when we thought we saw one of the boulders, with which the island was liberally besprinkled, on the move. Running up to examine it with all the eagerness of children let out of school, we found it to be one of the inhabitants, a monstrous tortoise. I had seen some big turtle around the cays of the Gulf of Mexico, but this creature dwarfed them all. We had no means of actually measuring him, and had to keep clear of his formidable-looking jaws, but roughly, and within the mark, he was four feet long by two feet six inches wide. Of course he was much more dome-shaped than the turtle are, and consequently looked a great deal bigger than a turtle of the same measurement would, besides being much thicker through. As he was loth to stay with us, we made up our minds to go with him, for he was evidently making for some definite spot, by the tracks he was following, which showed plainly how many years that same road had been used. Well, I mounted on his back, keeping well astern, out of the reach of that serious-looking head, which, having rather a long neck, looked as if it might be able to reach round and take a piece out of a fellow without any trouble. He was perfectly amicable, continuing his journey as if nothing had happened, and really getting over the ground at a good rate, considering the bulk and shape of him. Except for the novelty of the thing, this sort of ride had nothing to recommend it; so I soon tired of it, and let him waddle along in peace. By following the tracks aforesaid, we arrived at a fine stream of water sparkling out of a hillside, and running down a little ravine. The sides of this gully were worn quite smooth by the innumerable feet of the tortoises, about a dozen of which were now quietly crouching at the water's edge, filling themselves up with the cooling fluid. I did not see the patriarch upon whom a sailor once reported that he had read the legend carved, 'The Ark, Captain Noah. Ararat for orders'; perhaps he had at last closed his peaceful career. But strange and quaint as this exhibition of ancient reptiles was, we had other and better employment for the limited time at our

disposal. There were innumerable curious things to see, and, unless we were to run the risk of going on board again and stopping there, dinner must be obtained. Eggs of various kinds were exceedingly plentiful; in many places the flats were almost impassable for sitting birds, mostly 'boobies.'

But previous experience of boobies' eggs in other places had not disposed me to seek them where others were to be obtained, and as I had seen many of the well-known frigate or man-o'-war bird hovering about, we set out to the other side of the island in search of the breeding-place.

These peculiar birds are, I think, misnamed. They should be called pirate or buccancer birds, from their marauding habits. Seldom or never do they condescend to fish for themselves, preferring to hover high in the blue, their tails opening and closing like a pair of scissors as they hang poised above the sea. Presently a booby—like some honest housewife who has been a-marketing—comes flapping noisily home, her maw laden with fish for the chick. Down comes the black watcher from above with a swoop like an eagle. Booby puts all she knows into her flight, but vainly; escape is impossible, so with a despairing shriek she drops her load. Before it has touched the water the graceful thief has intercepted it, and soared slowly aloft again, to repeat the performance as occasion serves.

When we arrived on the outer shore of the island, we found a large breeding-place of these birds, but totally different to the haunt of the boobies. The nests, if they might be so called, being at best a few twigs, were mostly in the hollows of the rocks, the number of eggs being two to a nest, on an average. The eggs were nearly as large as a turkey's. But I am reminded of the range of size among turkeys' eggs, so I must say they were considerably larger than a small turkey's egg. Their flavour was most delicate, as much so as the eggs of a moor-fed fowl. We saw no birds sitting, but here and there the gaunt skeleton forms of birds, who by reason of sickness or old age were unable to provide for themselves and so sat waiting for death, appealed most mournfully to us. We went up to some of these poor creatures, and ended their long agony; but there were many of them that we were obliged to leave to Nature.

We saw no animals larger than a rat, but there were a great many of those eerie-looking land-crabs, that seemed as if almost humanly intelligent as they scampered about over the sand or through the undergrowth, busy about goodness knows what. The beautiful cocoa-nut palm was plentiful, so much so that I wondered why there were no settlers to collect 'copra,' or dried cocoa-nut for oil. My West Indian experience came in handy now, for I was



able to climb a lofty tree in native fashion, and cut down a graird bunch of green nuts, which form one of the most refreshing and nutritious of foods, as well as a cool and delicious drink. We had no line with us, so we took off our belts, which, securely joined together, answered my purpose very well. With them I made a hoop round the tree and myself; then as I climbed I pushed the hoop up with me, so that whenever I wanted a rest, I had only to lean back in it, keeping my knees against the trunk, and I was almost as comfortable as if on the ground.

After getting the nuts, we made a fire and roasted some of our eggs, which, with a biscuit or two, made a delightful meal. Then we fell asleep under a shady tree, upon some soft moss; nor did we wake again until nearly time to go on board. A most enjoyable swim terminated our day's outing, and we returned to the beach abreast of the ship very pleased with the excursion.

We had no adventures, found no hidden treasure or ferocious animals, but none the less we thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. While we sat waiting for the boat to come and fetch us off, we saw a couple of good-sized turtle come ashore quite close to us. We kept perfectly still until we were sure of being able to intercept them. As soon as they had got far enough away from their native element, we rushed upon them, and captured them both, so that when the boat arrived we were not empty-handed. We had also a 'jumper,' or blouse, full of eggs, and a couple of immense bunches of coconuts. When we got on board we felt quite happy, and, for the first time since leaving America, we had a little singing. Shall I be laughed at when I confess that our musical efforts were confined to Sankey's hymns? Maybe, but I do not care. Cheap and clapper as the music may be, it tasted 'real good,' as Abner said, and I am quite sure that that Sunday night was the best that any of us had spent for a very long time.

A long, sound sleep was terminated at dawn, when we weighed and stood out through a narrow passage by East Island, which was quite covered with fine trees—of what kind I do not know, but they presented a beautiful sight. Myriads of birds hovered about, busy fishing from the countless schools that rippled the placid sea. Beneath us, at twenty fathoms, the wonderful architecture of the coral was plainly visible through the brilliantly-clear sea, while, wherever the tiny builders had raised their fairy domain near the surface, an occasional roller would crown it with a snowy garland of foam—a dazzling patch of white against the sapphire sea. Altogether, such a panorama was spread out at our feet, as we stood gazing from the lofty crow's-nest, as was worth a year or two of city life to witness. I could not help pitying my companion, one of the Portuguese harpooners, who stolidly munched his quid with

no eyes for any of these glorious pictures, no thought of anything but a possible whale in sight.

My silent rhapsodies were rudely interrupted by something far away on the horizon. Hardly daring to breathe, I strained my eyes, and—yes, it was—'Ah blow-w-w!' I bellowed at the top of my lung-power. Never before had I had the opportunity of thus distinguishing myself, and I felt a bit sore about it.

There was a little obliquity about the direction of the spout that made me hopeful, for the cachalot alone sends his spout diagonally upward, all the others spout vertically. It was but a school of kogia, or 'short-headed' cachalots; but as we secured five of them averaging seven barrels each, with scarcely any trouble, I felt quite pleased with myself. We had quite an exciting bit of sport with them, they were so lively; but as for danger—well, they only seemed like big 'black fish' to us now, and we quite enjoyed the fun. They were, in all respects, miniature sperm whales, except that the head was much shorter and smaller in proportion to the body than their big relations.

## II

### *Round the Cocos and Seychelles*

HITHERTO, with the exception of a couple of gales in the North and South Atlantic, we had been singularly fortunate in our weather. It does happen so sometimes.

I remember once making a round voyage from Cardiff to Hong Kong and the Philippines, back to London, in ten months, and during the whole of that time we did not have a downright gale. The worst weather we encountered was between Beachy Head and Portland, going round from London to Cardiff.

And I once spoke the barque *Lutterworth*, a companion ship to us from Portland, Oregon to Falmouth, whose mate informed me that they carried their royals from port to port without ever furling them once, except to shift the suit of sails. But now a change was evidently imminent. Of course, we forward had no access to the barometer; not that we should have understood its indications if we had seen it, but we all knew that something was going to be radically wrong with the weather. For instead of the lovely blue of the sky we had been so long accustomed to by day and night, a nasty, greasy shade had come over the heavens, which, reflected in the sea, made that look dirty and stale also. That well-known appearance of the waves before a storm was also very marked, which consists of an undecided sort of break in their tops. Instead of running regularly, they seemed to hunch themselves up in little

heaps, and throw off a tiny flutter of spray, which generally fell in the opposite direction to what little wind there was. The pigs and fowls felt the approaching change keenly, and manifested the greatest uneasiness, leaving their food and acting strangely. We were making scarcely any headway, so that the storm was longer making its appearance than it would have been had we been a swift clipper ship running down the Indian Ocean. For two days we were kept in suspense; but on the second night the gloom began to deepen, the wind to moan, and a very uncomfortable 'joggle' of a sea got up. Extra 'gaskets' were put upon the sails, and everything movable about the decks was made as secure as it could be. Only the two close-reefed topsails and two storm stay-sails were carried, so that we were in excellent trim for fighting the bad weather when it did come. The sky gradually darkened and assumed a livid green tint, the effect of which was most peculiar.

The wind blew fitfully in short gusts, veering continually back and forth over about a quarter of the compass. Although it was still light, it kept up an incessant mournful moan not to be accounted for in any way. Darker and darker grew the heavens, although no clouds were visible, only a general pall of darkness. Glimmering lightnings played continually about the eastern horizon, but not brilliant enough to show us the approaching storm-cloud. And so came the morning of the third day from the beginning of the change. But for the clock we should hardly have known that day had broken, so gloomy and dark was the sky. At last light came in the east, but such a light as no one would wish to see. It was a lurid glare, such as may be seen playing over a cupola of Bessemer steel when the spiegeleisen is added, only on such an extensive scale that its brilliancy was dulled into horror. Then, beneath it we saw the mountainous clouds fringed with dull violet and with jagged sabres of lightning darting from their solid black bosoms. The wind began to rise steadily but rapidly, so that by eight a.m. it was blowing a furious gale from E.N.E. In direction it was still unsteady, the ship coming up and falling off to it several points. Now, great masses of torn, ragged cloud hurtled past us above, so low down as almost to touch the masts. Still the wind increased, still the sea rose, till at last the skipper judged it well to haul down the tiny triangle of storm stay-sail still set (the topsail and fore stay-sail had been furled long before), and let her drift under bare poles, except for three square feet of stout canvas in the weather mizen-rigging. The roar of the wind now dominated every sound, so that it might have been thundering furiously, but we should not have heard it. The ship still maintained her splendid character as a sea-boat, hardly shipping a drop of water; but she lay over at a most distressing angle, her deck sloping off fully

thirty-five to forty degrees. Fortunately she did not roll to windward. It may have been raining in perfect torrents, but the tempest tore off the surface of the sea, and sent it in massive sheets continually flying over us, so that we could not possibly have distinguished between fresh water and salt.

The chief anxiety was for the safety of the boats. Early on the second day of warning they had been hoisted to the topmost notch of the cranes, and secured as thoroughly as experience could suggest; but at every lee lurch we gave it seemed as if we must dip them under water, while the wind threatened to stave the weather ones in by its actual solid weight. It was now blowing a furious cyclone, the force of which has never been accurately gauged (even by the present elaborate instruments of various kinds in use). That force is, however, not to be imagined by any one who has not witnessed it, except that one notable instance is on record by which mathematicians may get an approximate estimate.

Captain Toynbee, the late highly respected and admired Marine Superintendent of the British Meteorological Office, has told us how, during a cyclone which he rode out in the *Hotspur* at Sandheads, the mouth of the Hooghly, the three naked topgallant-masts of his ship, though of well-tested timber a foot in diameter, and supported by all the usual network of stays, and without the yards, were snapped off and carried away solely by the violence of the wind. It must, of course, have been an extreme gust, which did not last many seconds, for no cable that was ever forged would have held the ship against such a cataclysm as that. This gentleman's integrity is above suspicion, so that no exaggeration could be charged against him, and he had the additional testimony of his officers and men to this otherwise incredible fact.

The terrible day wore on, without any lightening of the tempest, till noon, when the wind suddenly fell to a calm. Until that time, the sea, although heavy, was not vicious or irregular, and we had not shipped any heavy water at all. But when the force of the wind was suddenly withdrawn, such a sea arose as I have never seen before or since. Inky mountains of water raised their savage heads in wildest confusion, smashing one another in whirlpools of foam. It was like a picture of the primeval deep out of which arose the new-born world. Suddenly out of the whirling blackness overhead the moon appeared, nearly in the zenith, sending down through the apex of a dome of torn and madly gyrating cloud a flood of brilliant light. Illumined by that startling radiance, our staunch and seaworthy ship was tossed and twirled in the hideous vortex of mad sea until her motion was distracting. It was quite impossible to loose one's hold and attempt to do anything without running the imminent risk of being dashed to pieces. Our decks were full

of water now, for it tumbled on board at all points; but as yet no serious weight of a sea had fallen upon us, not had any damage been done. Such a miracle as that could not be expected to continue for long. Suddenly a warning shout rang out from somewhere—'Hold on all, for your lives!' Out of the hideous turmoil around arose, like some black, fantastic ruin, an awful heap of water. Higher and higher it towered, until it was level with our lower yards, then it broke and fell upon us. All was blank. Beneath that mass every thought, every feeling, fled but one—'How long shall I be able to hold my breath?' After what seemed a never-ending time, we emerged from the wave more dead than alive, but with the good ship still staunch underneath us, and Hope's lamp burning brightly. The moon had been momentarily obscured, but now shone out again, lighting up brilliantly our bravely-battling ship. But, alas for others!—men, like ourselves, whose hopes were gone. Quite near us was the battered remainder of what had been a splendid ship. Her masts were gone, not even the stumps being visible, and it seemed to our eager eyes as if she was settling down. It was even so, for as we looked, unmindful of our own danger, she quietly disappeared—swallowed up with her human freight in a moment, like a pebble dropped into a pond.

While we looked with hardly beating hearts at the place where she had sunk, all was blotted out in thick darkness again. With a roar, as of a thousand thunders, the tempest came once more, but from the opposite direction now. As we were under no sail, we ran little risk of being caught aback; but, even had we, nothing could have been done, the vessel being utterly out of control, besides the impossibility of getting about. It so happened, however, that when the storm burst upon us again, we were stern on to it, and we drove steadily for a few moments until we had time to haul to the wind again. Great heavens! how it blew! Surely, I thought, this cannot last long—just as we sometimes say of the rain when it is extra heavy. It did last, however, for what seemed an interminable time, although any one could see that the sky was getting kindlier. Gradually, imperceptibly, it took off, the sky cleared, and the tumult ceased, until a new day broke in untellable beauty over a revived world.

Years afterwards I read, in one of the hand-books treating of hurricanes and cyclones, that 'in the centre of these revolving storms the sea is so violent that few ships can pass through it and live.' That is true talk. I have been there, and bear witness that but for the build and sea-kindliness of the *Cachalot*, she could not have come out of that horrible cauldron again, but would have joined that nameless unfortunate whom we saw succumb, 'never again heard of.' As it was, we found two of the boats stove in,

whether by breaking sea or crushing wind nobody knows. Most of the planking of the bulwarks was also gone, burst outward by the weight of the water on deck. Only the normal quantity of water was found in the well on sounding, and not even a rope-yarn was gone from aloft. Altogether, we came out of the ordeal triumphantly, where many a gallant vessel met her fate, and the behaviour of the grand old tub gave me a positive affection for her, such as I have never felt for a ship before or since.

There was now a big heap of work for the carpenter, so the skipper decided to run in for the Cocos or Keeling Islands, in order to lay quietly and refit. We had now only three boats sound, the one smashed when poor Bamberger died being still unfinished—of course, the repairs had practically amounted to rebuilding. Therefore we kept away for this strange assemblage of reefs and islets, arriving off them early the next day.

They consist of a true 'atoll,' or basin, whose rim is of coral reefs, culminating occasionally in sandy islands or cays formed by the accumulated *débris* washed up from the reef below, and then clothed upon with all sorts of plants by the agency of birds and waves.

These islands have lately been so fully described in many different journals, that I shall not burden the reader with any twice-told tales about them, but merely chronicle the fact that for a week we lay at anchor off one of the outlying cays, toiling continuously to get the vessel again in fighting trim.

At last the overworked carpenter and his crew got through their heavy task, and the order was given to 'man the windlass.' Up came the anchor, and away we went again towards what used to be a noted haunt of the sperm whale, the Seychelle Archipelago. Before the French, whose flag flies over these islands, had with their usual short-sighted policy, clapped on prohibitive port charges, Mahé was a specially favoured place of call for the whalers. But when whale-ships find that it does not pay to visit a place, being under no compulsion as regards time, they soon find other harbours that serve their turn. We, of course, had no need to visit any port for some time to come, having made such good use of our opportunities at the Cocos.

We found whales scarce and small, so, although we cruised in this vicinity for nearly two months, six small cow cachalots were all we were able to add to our stock, representing less than two hundred barrels of oil. This was hardly good enough for Captain Slocum. Therefore, we gradually drew away from this beautiful cluster of islands, and crept across the Indian Ocean towards the Straits of Malacca. On the way, we one night encountered that strange phenomenon, a 'milk' sea. It was a lovely night, with

scarcely any wind, the stars trying to make up for the absence of the moon by shining with intense brightness. The water had been more phosphorescent than usual, so that every little fish left a track of light behind him, greatly disproportionate to his size. As the night wore on, the sea grew brighter and brighter, until by midnight we appeared to be sailing on an ocean of lambent flames. Every little wave that broke against the ship's side sent up a shower of diamond-like spray, wonderfully beautiful to see, while a passing shoal of porpoises fairly set the sea blazing as they leaped and gambolled in its glowing waters. Looking up from sea to sky, the latter seemed quite black instead of blue, and the lustre of the stars was diminished till they only looked like points of polished steel, having quite lost for the time their radiant sparkle. In that shining flood the blackness of the ship stood out in startling contrast, and when we looked over the side our faces were strangely lit up by the brilliant glow.

For several hours this beautiful appearance persisted, fading away at last as gradually as it came. No satisfactory explanation of this curious phenomenon has ever been given, nor does it appear to portend any change of weather. It cannot be called a rare occurrence, although I have only seen it thrice myself—once in the Bay of Cavité, in the Philippine Islands; once in the Pacific, near the Solomon Islands; and on this occasion of which I now write. But no one who had ever witnessed it could forget so wonderful a sight.

One morning, a week after we had taken our departure from the Seychelles, the officer at the main crow's-nest reported a vessel of some sort about five miles to the windward. Something strange in her appearance made the skipper haul up to intercept her. As we drew nearer, we made her out to be a Malay 'prahu;' but, by the look of her, she was deserted. The big three-cornered sail that had been set, hung in tattered festoons from the long, slender yard, which, without any gear to steady it, swung heavily to and fro as the vessel rolled to the long swell. We drew closer and closer, but no sign of life was visible on board, so the captain ordered a boat to go and investigate.

In two minutes we were speeding away towards her, and, making a sweep round her stern, prepared to board her. But we were met by a stench so awful that Mr. Count would not proceed, and at once returned to the ship. The boat was quickly hoisted again, and the ship manœuvred to pass close to windward of the derelict. Then, from our mast-head, a horrible sight became visible. Lying about the weather-beaten deck, in various postures, were thirteen corpses, all far advanced in decay, which horrible fact fully accounted for the intolerable stench that had driven us away. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to say that we promptly

hauled our wind, and placed a good distance between us and that awful load of death as soon as possible. Poor wretches! What terrible calamity had befallen them, we could not guess; whatever it was, it had been complete; nor would any sane man falling across them run the risk of closer examination into details than we had done. It was a great pity that we were not able to sink the prahu with her ghastly cargo, and so free the air from that poisonous foetor that was a deadly danger to any vessel getting under her lee.

Next day, and for a whole week after, we had a stark calm—such a calm as one realizes who reads sympathetically that magical piece of work, the 'Ancient Mariner.' What an amazing instance of the triumph of the human imagination! For Coleridge certainly never witnessed such a scene as he there describes with an accuracy of detail that is astounding. Very few sailors have noticed the sickening condition of the ocean when the life-giving breeze totally fails for any length of time, or, if they have, they have said but little about it. Of course, some parts of the sea show the evil effects of stagnation much sooner than others; but, generally speaking, want of wind at sea, if long continued, produces a condition of things dangerous to the health of any land near by. Whale-ships, penetrating as they do to parts carefully avoided by ordinary trading vessels, often afford their crews an opportunity of seeing things mostly hidden from the sight of man, when, actuated by some mysterious impulse, the uncanny denizens of the middle depths of the ocean rise to higher levels, and show their weird shapes to the sun.

## 12

*Which Treats of the Kraken*

It has often been a matter for considerable surprise to me, that while the urban population of Great Britain is periodically agitated over the great sea-serpent question, sailors, as a class, have very little to say on the subject. During a considerable sea experience in all classes of vessels, except men-of-war, and in most positions, I have heard a fairly comprehensive catalogue of subjects brought under dog-watch discussion; but the sea-serpent has never, within my recollection, been one of them.

The reasons for this abstinence may vary a great deal, but chief among them is—sailors, as a class, 'don't believe in no such a pusson.' More than that, they do believe that the mythical sea-serpent is 'boomed' at certain periods, in the lack of other subjects, which may not be far from the fact. But there is also another reason, involving a disagreeable, although strictly accurate, statement.



Sailors are, again taken as a class, the least observant of men. They will talk by the hour of trivialities about which they know nothing; they will spin interminable ‘cuffers’ of debaucheries ashore all over the world; pick to pieces the reputation of all the officers with whom they have ever sailed; but of the glories, marvels, and mysteries of the mighty deep you will hear not a word. I can never forget when on my first voyage to the West Indies, at the age of twelve, I was one night smitten with awe and wonder at the sight of a vast halo round the moon, some thirty or forty degrees in diameter. Turning to the man at the wheel, I asked him earnestly ‘what *that* was.’ He looked up with an uninterested eye for an instant in the direction of my finger, then listlessly informed me, ‘That’s what they call a sarcle.’ For a long time I wondered what he could mean, but it gradually dawned upon me that it was his Norfolk pronunciation of the word ‘circle.’ The definition was a typical one, no worse than would be given by the great majority of seamen of most of the natural phenomena they witness daily. Very few seamen could distinguish between one whale and another of a different species, or give an intelligible account of the most ordinary and often-seen denizens of the sea. Whalers are especially to be blamed for their blindness. ‘Eyes and no Eyes; or the Art of Seeing’ has evidently been little heard of among them. To this day I can conceive of no more delightful journey for a naturalist to take than a voyage in a southern whaler, especially if he were allowed to examine at his leisure such creatures as were caught. But on board the *Cachalot* I could get no information at all upon the habits of the strange creatures we met with, except whales, and very little about them.

I have before referred to the great molluscs upon which the sperm whale feeds, portions of which I so frequently saw ejected from the stomach of dying whales. Great as my curiosity naturally was to know more of these immense organisms, all my inquiries on the subject were fruitless. These veterans of the whale-fishery knew that the sperm whale lived on big cuttle-fish; but they neither knew, nor cared to know, anything more about these marvellous molluscs. Yet, from the earliest dawn of history, observant men have been striving to learn something definite about the marine monsters of which all old legends of the sea have something to say.

As I mentioned in the last chapter, we were gradually edging across the Indian Ocean towards Sumatra, but had been checked in our course by a calm lasting a whole week. A light breeze then sprang up, aided by which we crept around Achin Head, the northern point of the great island of Sumatra. Like some gigantic beacon, the enormous mass of the Golden Mountain dominated the peaceful scene. Pulo Way, or Water Island, looked very in-

viting, and I should have been glad to visit a place so well known to seamen by sight, but so little known by actual touching at. Our recent stay at the Cocos, however, had settled the question of our calling anywhere else for some time decidedly in the negative, unless we might be compelled by accident; moreover, even in these days of law and order, it is not wise to go poking about among the islands of the Malayan seas unless you are prepared to fight. Our mission being to fight whales, we were averse to running any risks, except in the lawful and necessary exercise of our calling.

It would at first sight appear strange that, in view of the enormous traffic of steamships through the Malacca Straits, so easily 'gallied' a creature as the cachalot should care to frequent its waters; indeed, I should certainly think that a great reduction in the numbers of whales found there must have taken place. But it must also be remembered, that in modern steam navigation certain well-defined courses are laid down, which vessels follow from point to point with hardly any deviation therefrom, and that consequently little disturbance of the sea by their panting propellers takes place, except upon these marine pathways; as, for instance, in the Red Sea, where the examination of thousands of log-books proved conclusively that, except upon straight lines drawn from point to point between Suze to Perim, the sea is practically unused to-day.

The few Arab dhows and loitering surveying ships hardly count in this connection, of course. At any rate, we had not entered the straits, but were cruising between Car Nicobar and Junkseylon, when we 'met up' with a full-grown cachalot, as ugly a customer as one could wish. From nine a.m. till dusk the battle raged—for I have often noticed that unless you kill your whale pretty soon, he gets so wary, as well as fierce, that you stand a gaudy chance of being worn down yourselves before you settle accounts with your adversary. This affair certainly looked at one time as if such would be the case with us; but along about five p.m., to our great joy, we got him killed. The ejected food was in masses of enormous size, larger than any we had yet seen on the voyage, some of them being estimated to be of the size of our hatch-house, viz. 8 feet  $\times$  6 feet  $\times$  6 feet. The whale having been secured alongside, all hands were sent below, as they were worn out with the day's work. The third mate being ill, I had been invested with the questionable honour of standing his watch, on account of my sea experience and growing favour with the chief. Very bitterly did I resent the privilege at the time, I remember, being so tired and sleepy that I knew not how to keep awake. I did not imagine that anything would happen to make me prize that night's experience for the rest of my life, or I should have taken matters with a far better grace.

At about eleven p.m. I was leaning over the lee<sup>9</sup> rail, gazing steadily at the bright surface of the sea, where the intense radiance of the tropical moon made a broad path like a pavement of burnished silver. Eyes that saw not, mind only confusedly conscious of my surroundings, were mine; but suddenly I started to my feet with an exclamation, and stared with all my might at the strangest sight I ever saw. There was a violent commotion in the sea right where the moon's rays were concentrated, so great that, remembering our position, I was at first inclined to alarm all hands; for I had often heard of volcanic islands suddenly lifting their heads from the depths below, or disappearing in a moment, and, with Sumatra's chain of active volcanoes so near, I felt doubtful indeed of what was now happening. Getting the night-glasses out of the cabin scuttle, where they were always hung in readiness, I focussed them on the troubled spot, perfectly satisfied by a short examination that neither volcano nor earthquake had anything to do with what was going on; yet so vast were the forces engaged that I might well have been excused for my first supposition. A very large sperm whale was locked in deadly conflict with a cuttlefish, or squid, almost as large as himself, whose interminable tentacles seemed to enlacc the whole of his great body. The head of the whale especially seemed a perfect net-work of writhing arms—naturally, I suppose, for it appeared as if the whale had the tail part of the mollusc in his jaws, and, in a business-like, methodical way, was sawing through it. By the side of the black columnar head of the whale appeared the head of the great squid, as awful an object as one could well imagine even in a fevered dream. Judging as carefully as possible, I estimated it to be at least as large as one of our pipes, which contained three hundred and fifty gallons; but it may have been, and probably was, a good deal larger. The eyes were very remarkable from their size and blackness, which, contrasted with the livid whiteness of the head, made their appearance all the more striking. They were, at least, a foot in diameter, and, seen under such conditions, looked decidedly eerie and hobgoblin-like. All around the combatants were numerous sharks, like jackals round a lion, ready to share the feast, and apparently assisting in the destruction of the huge cephalopod. So the titanic struggle went on, in perfect silence as far as we were concerned, because, even had there been any noise, our distance from the scene of conflict would not have permitted us to hear it.

Thinking that such a sight ought not to be missed by the captain, I overcame my dread of him sufficiently to call him, and tell him of what was taking place. He met my remarks with such a furious burst of anger at my daring to disturb him for such a cause, that

I fled precipitately on deck again, having the remainder of the vision to myself, for none of the others cared sufficiently for such things to lose five minutes' sleep in witnessing them. The conflict ceased, the sea resumed its placid calm, and nothing remained to tell of the fight but a strong odour of fish, as of a bank of seaweed left by the tide in the blazing sun. Eight bells struck, and I went below to a troubled sleep, wherein all the awful monsters that an over-excited brain could conjure up pursued me through the gloomy caves of ocean, or mocked my pigmy efforts to escape.

The occasions upon which these gigantic cuttle-fish appear at the sea surface must, I think, be very rare. From their construction, they appear fitted only to grope among the rocks at the bottom of the ocean. Their mode of progression is backward, by the forcible ejection of a jet of water from an orifice in the neck, besides the rectum or cloaca. Consequently their normal position is head-downward, and with tentacles spread out like the ribs of an umbrella—eight of them at least; the two long ones, like the antennæ of an insect, rove unceasingly around, seeking prey.

The imagination can hardly picture a more terrible object than one of these huge monsters brooding in the ocean depths, the gloom of his surroundings increased by the inky fluid (sepia) which he secretes in copious quantities, every cup-shaped disc, of the hundreds with which the restless tentacles are furnished, ready at the slightest touch to grip whatever is near, not only by suction, but by the great claws set all round within its circle. And in the centre of this net-work of living traps is the chasm-like mouth, with its enormous parrot-beak, ready to rend piecemeal whatever is held by the tentaculæ. The very thought of it makes one's flesh crawl. Well did Michelet term them 'the insatiable nightmares of the sea.'

Yet, but for them, how would such great creatures as the sperm whale be fed? Unable, from their bulk, to capture small fish except by accident, and, by the absence of a sieve of baleen, precluded from subsisting upon the tiny crustacea which support the *Mysticetæ*, the cachalots seem to be confined for their diet to cuttle-fish, and, from their point of view, the bigger the latter are the better. How big they may become in the depths of the sea, no man knoweth; but it is unlikely that even the vast specimens seen are full-sized, since they have only come to the surface under abnormal conditions, like the one I have attempted to describe, who had evidently been dragged up by his relentless foe.

Creatures like these, who inhabit deep waters, and do not need to come to the surface by the exigencies of their existence, necessarily present many obstacles to accurate investigation of their structure and habits; but, from the few specimens that have been

obtained of late years, fairly comprehensive details have been compiled, and may be studied in various French and German works, of which the Natural History Museum at South Kensington possesses copies. These, through the courtesy of the authorities in charge, are easily accessible to students who wish to prosecute the study of this wonderful branch of the great mollusca family.

When we commenced to cut in our whale next morning, the sea was fairly alive with fish of innumerable kinds, while a vast host of sea-birds, as usual, waited impatiently for the breaking-up of the huge carcass, which they knew would afford them no end of a feast. An untoward accident, which happened soon after the work was started, gave the waiting myriads immense satisfaction, although the unfortunate second mate, whose slip of the spade was responsible, came in for a hurricane of vituperation from the enraged skipper. It was in detaching the case from the head—always a work of difficulty, and requiring great precision of aim. Just as Mr. Cruce made a powerful thrust with his keen tool, the vessel rolled, and the blow, missing the score in which he was cutting, fell upon the case instead, piercing its side. For a few minutes the result was unnoticed amidst the wash of the ragged edges of the cut, but presently a long streak of white, wax-like pieces floating astern, and a tremendous commotion among the birds, told the story. The liquid spermaceti was leaking rapidly from the case, turning solid as it got into the cool water. Nothing could be done to stop the waste, which, as it was a large whale, was not less than twenty barrels, or about two tuns of pure spermaceti. An accident of this kind never failed to make our skipper almost unbearable in his temper for some days afterwards; and, to do him justice, he did not discriminate very carefully as to who felt his resentment besides its immediate cause.

Therefore we had all a rough time of it while his angry fit lasted, which was a whole week, or until all was shipshape again. Meanwhile we were edging gradually through the Malacca Straits and around the big island of Borneo, never going very near the land on account of the great and numerous dangers attendant upon coasting in those localities to any but those continually engaged in such a business.

Indeed, all navigation in those seas to sailing vessels is dangerous, and requires the greatest care. Often we were obliged at a minute's notice to let go the anchor, although out of sight of land, some rapid current being found carrying us swiftly towards a shoal or race, where we might come to grief. Yet there was no fuss or hurry, the same leisurely old system was continued, and worked as well as ever. But it was not apparent why we were threading the tortuous and difficult waters of the Indian Archipelago. No whales

of any kind were seen for at least a month, although, from our leisurely mode of sailing, it was evident that they were looked for.

An occasional native craft came alongside, desirous of bartering fish, which we did not want, being able to catch all we needed as readily almost as they were. Fruit and vegetables we could not get at such distances from land, for the small canoes that lie in wait for passing ships do not of course venture far from home.

## 13

*Off to the Japan Grounds*

VERY tedious and trying was our passage northward, although every effort was made by the skipper to expedite it. Nothing of advantage to our cargo was seen for a long time, which, although apparently what was to be expected, did not improve Captain Slocum's temper. But, to the surprise of all, when we had arrived off the beautiful island of Hong Kong, to which we approached closely, we 'raised' a grand sperm whale.

Many fishing-junks were in sight, busily plying their trade, and at any other time we should have been much interested in the quaint and cunning devices by which the patient, wily Chinaman succeeds so admirably as a fisherman. Our own fishing, for the time being, absorbed all our attention—the more, perhaps, that we had for so long been unable to do anything in that line. After the usual preliminaries, we were successful in getting fast to the great creature, who immediately showed fight. So skilful and wary did he prove that Captain Slocum, growing impatient at our manœuvring with no result, himself took the field, arriving on the scene with the air of one who comes to see and conquer without more delay. He brought with him a weapon which I have not hitherto mentioned, because none of the harpooners could be induced to use it, and consequently it had not been much in evidence. Theoretically, it was an ideal tool for such work, its chief drawback being its cumbrousness. It was known as 'Pierce's darting gun,' being a combination of bomb-gun and harpoon, capable of being darted at the whale like a plain harpoon. Its construction was simple; indeed, the patent was a very old one. A tube of brass, thickening towards the butt, at which was a square chamber firmly welded to a socket for receiving the pole, formed the gun itself. Within the chamber aforesaid a nipple protruded from the base of the tube, and in line with it. The trigger was simply a flat bit of steel, like a piece of clock spring, which was held down by the hooked end of a steel rod long enough to stick out beyond the muzzle of the gun three or four inches, and held in position by two

flanges at the butt and muzzle of the barrel. On the opposite side of the tube were two more flanges, close together, into the holes of which was inserted the end of a specially made harpoon, having an eye twisted in its shank through which the whale line was spliced. The whole machine was fitted to a neat pole, and strongly secured to it by means of a 'gun warp,' or short piece of thin line, by which it could be hauled back into the boat after being darted at a whale. To prepare this weapon for use the barrel was loaded with a charge of powder and a bomb similar to those used in the shoulder-guns, the point of which just protruded from the muzzle. An ordinary percussion cap was placed upon the nipple, and the trigger cocked by placing the trigger-rod in position. The harpoon, with the line attached, was firmly set into the socketed flanges prepared for it, and the whole arrangement was then ready to be darted at the whale in the usual way.

Supposing the aim to be good and the force sufficient, the harpoon would penetrate the blubber until the end of the trigger-rod was driven backwards by striking the blubber, releasing the trigger and firing the gun. Thus the whale would be harpooned and bomb-lanced at the same time, and, supposing everything to work satisfactorily, very little more could be needed to finish him. But the weapon was so cumbersome and awkward, and the harpooners stood in such awe of it, that in the majority of cases the whale was either missed altogether or the harpoon got such slight hold that the gun did not go off, the result being generally disastrous.

In the present case, however, the 'Pierce' gun was in the hands of a man by no means nervous, and above criticism or blame in case of failure. So when he sailed in to the attack, and delivered his 'swashing blow,' the report of the gun was immediately heard, proving conclusively that a successful stroke had been made.

It had an instantaneous and astonishing effect. The sorely-wounded monster, with one tremendous expiration, rolled over and over swift as thought towards his aggressor, literally burying the boat beneath his vast bulk. Now, one would have thought surely, upon seeing this, that none of that boat's crew would ever have been seen again. Nevertheless, strange as it may appear, out of that seething lather of foam, all six heads emerged again in an instant, but on the *other* side of the great creature. How any of them escaped instant violent death was, and from the nature of the case must ever remain, an unravelled mystery, for the boat was crumbled into innumerable fragments, and the three hundred fathoms of line, in a perfect maze of entanglement, appeared to be wrapped about the writhing trunk of the whale. Happily, there were two boats disengaged, so that they were able very promptly to rescue the sufferers from their perilous position in the boiling

vortex of foam by which they were surrounded. Meanwhile, the remaining boat had an easy task. The shot delivered by the captain had taken deadly effect, the bomb having entered the creature's side low down, directly abait the pectoral fin. It must have exploded within the cavity of the bowels, from its position, causing such extensive injuries as to make even that vast animal's death but a matter of a few moments. Therefore, we did not run any unnecessary risks, but hauled off to a safe distance and quietly watched the death-throes. They were so brief, that in less than ten minutes from the time of the accident we were busy securing the line through the flukes of our prize.

The vessel was an unusually long time working up to us, so slow, in fact, that Mr. Count remarked, critically, 'Shouldn't wonder if th' ole man ain't hurt; they're taking things so all-fired easy.' By the time she had reached us, we had a good few visitors around us from the fishing fleet, who caused us no little anxiety. The Chinese have no prejudices; they would just as soon steal a whale as a herring, if the conveyance could be effected without more trouble or risk to their own yellow skins. If it involved the killing of a few foreign devils—well, so much to the good. The ship, however, arrived before the fishermen had decided upon any active steps, and we got our catch alongside without any delay. The truth of Mr. Count's forecast was verified to the hilt, for we found that the captain was so badly bruised about the body that he was unable to move, while one of the hands, a Portuguese, was injured internally, and seemed very bad indeed. Had any one told us that morning that we should be sorry to see Captain Slocum with sore bones, we should have scoffed at the notion, and some of us would probably have said that we should like to have the opportunity of making him smart. But under the present circumstances, with some hundreds of perfectly ruthless wretches hovering around us, looking with longing eyes at the treasure we had alongside, we could not help remembering the courage and resource so often shown by the skipper, and wished with all our hearts that we could have the benefit of them now. As soon as dinner was over, we all 'turned to' with a will to get the whale cut in. None of us required to be told that to lay all night with that whale alongside would be extremely unhealthy for us, great doubt existing as to whether any of us would see morning dawn again. There was, too, just a possibility that when the carcass, stripped of its blubber, was cut adrift, those ravenous crowds would fasten upon it, and let us go in peace.

All hands, therefore, worked like Trojans. There was no need to drive us, nor was a single harsh word spoken. Nothing was heard but the almost incessant clatter of the windlass pawls, abrupt



monosyllabic orders, and the occasional melancholy wail of a gannet overhead. No word had been spoken on the subject among us, yet somehow we all realized that we were working for a large stake—no less than our lives. What! says somebody, within a few miles of Hong Kong? Oh yes; and even within Hong Kong harbour itself, if opportunity offers. Let any man go down the wharf at Hong Kong after sunset, and hail a sampan from the hundreds there that are waiting to be hired. Hardly will the summons have left his lips before a white policeman will be at his side, note-book in hand, inquiring his name and ship, and taking a note of the sampan's number, with the time of his leaving the wharf. Nothing perfunctory about the job either. Let but these precautions be omitted, and the chances that the passenger (if he have aught of value about him) will ever arrive at his destination are almost nil.

So good was the progress made that by five p.m. we were busy at the head, while the last few turns of the windlass were being taken to complete the skinning of the body. With a long pent-up shout that last piece was severed and swung inboard, as the huge mass of reeking flesh floated slowly astern. As it drifted away we saw the patient watchers who had been waiting converging upon it from all quarters, and our hopes rose high. But there was no slackening of our efforts to get in the head. By the time it was dark we managed to get the junk on board, and by the most extraordinary efforts lifted the whole remainder of the head high enough to make sail and stand off to sea. The wind was off the land, the water smooth, and no swell on, so we took no damage from that tremendous weight surging by our side, though, had the worst come to the worst, we could have cut it adrift.

When morning dawned we hove-to, the land being only dimly visible astern, and finished taking on board our 'head matter' without further incident. The danger past, we were all well pleased that the captain was below, for the work proceeded quite pleasantly under the genial rule of the mate. Since leaving port we had not felt so comfortable, the work, with all its disagreeables, seeming as nothing now that we could do it without fear and trembling. Alas for poor Jemmy!—as we always persisted in calling him from inability to pronounce his proper name—his case was evidently hopeless. His fellows did their poor best to comfort his fast-fleeting hours, one after another murmuring to him the prayers of the Church, which, although they did not understand them, they evidently believed most firmly to have some marvellous power to open the gates of paradise and cleanse the sinner. Notwithstanding the grim fact that their worship was almost pure superstition, it was far more in accordance with the fitness of things for a dying man's surroundings than such scenes as I have witnessed in the

forecastles of merchant ships when poor sailors lay a-dying. I remember well once, when I was second officer of a large passenger ship, going in the forecassle as she lay at anchor at St. Helena, to see a sick man. Half the crew were drunk, and the beastly kennel in which they lived was in a thick fog of tobacco-smoke and the stale stench of rum. Ribald songs, quarrelling, and blasphemy made a veritable pandemonium of the place. I passed quietly through it to the sick man's bunk, and found him—dead! He had passed away in the midst of that, but the horror of it did not seem to impress his bemused shipmates much.

Here, at any rate, there was quiet and decorum, while all that could be done for the poor sufferer (not much, from ignorance of how he was injured) was done. He was released from his pain in the afternoon of the second day after the accident, the end coming suddenly and peacefully. The same evening, at sunset, the body, neatly sewn up in canvas, with a big lump of sandstone secured to the feet, was brought on deck, laid on a hatch at the gangway, and covered with the blue, star-spangled American Jack. 'Then all hands were mustered in the waist, the ship's bell was tolled, and the ensign run up halfway.

The captain was still too ill to be moved, so the mate stepped forward with a rusty old Common Prayer-book in his hands, whereon my vagrant fancy immediately fastened in frantic endeavour to imagine how it came to be there. The silence of death was over all. True, the man was but a unit of no special note among us, but death had conferred upon him a brevet rank, in virtue of which he dominated every thought. It seemed strange to me that we who faced death so often and variously, until natural fear had become deadened by custom, should, now that one of our number lay a rapidly-corrupting husk before us, be so tremendously impressed by the simple, inevitable fact. I suppose it was because none of us were able to realize the immanence of Death until we saw his handiwork. Mr. Count opened the book, fumbling nervously among the unfamiliar leaves. Then he suddenly looked up, his weather-scarred face glowing a dull brick-red, and said, in a low voice, 'This thing's too many fer me; kin any of ye do it? Ef not, I guess we'll hev ter take it as read.' There was no response for a moment; then I stepped forward, reaching out my hand for the book. Its contents were familiar enough to me, for in happy pre-arab days I had been a chorister in the old Lock Chapel, Harrow Road, and had borne my part in the service so often that I think even now I could repeat the greater part of it *memoriter*. Mr. Count gave it me without a word, and, trembling like a leaf, I turned to the 'Burial Service,' and began the majestic sentences, 'I am the Resurrection and the Life, saith the Lord.' I did not

know my own voice as the wonderful words sounded clearly in the still air; but if ever a small body of soul-hardened men *felt* the power of God, it was then. At the words, 'We therefore commit his body to the deep,' I paused, and, the mate making a sign, two of the harpooners tilted the hatch, from which the remains slid off into the unknown depths with a dull splash. Several of the dead man's compatriots covered their faces, and murmured prayers for the repose of his soul, while the tears trickled through their horny fingers. But matters soon resumed their normal course; the tension over, back came the strings of life into position again, to play the same old tunes and discords once more.

The captured whale made an addition to our cargo of one hundred and ten barrels—a very fair haul indeed. The harpooners were disposed to regard this capture as auspicious upon opening the North Pacific, where, in spite of the time we had spent, and the fair luck we had experienced in the Indian Ocean, we expected to make the chief portion of our cargo.

Our next cruising-ground is known to whalers as the 'Coast of Japan' ground, and has certainly proved in the past the most prolific fishery of sperm whales in the whole world. I am inclined now to believe that there are more and larger cachalots to be found in the Southern Hemisphere, between the parallels of 33° and 50° South; but there the drawback of heavy weather and mountainous seas severely handicaps the fishermen.

It is somewhat of a misnomer to call the Coast of Japan ground by that name, since to be successful you should not sight Japan at all, but keep out of range of the cold current that sweeps right across the Pacific, skirting the Philippines, along the coasts of the Japanese islands as far as the Kuriles, and then returns to the eastward again to the southward of the Aleutian Archipelago. The greatest number of whales are always found in the vicinity of the Bonin and Volcano groups of islands, which lie in the eddy formed by the northward bend of the mighty current before mentioned. This wonderful ground was first cruised by a London whale-ship, the *Syren*, in 1819, when the English branch of the sperm whale-fishery was in its prime, and London skippers were proud of the fact that one of their number, in the *Emilia*, had thirty-one years before first ventured around Cape Horn in pursuit of the cachalot.

After the advent of the *Syren*, the Bonins became the favourite fishing-ground for both Americans and British, and for many years the catch of oil taken from these teeming waters averaged four thousand tons annually. That the value of the fishery was maintained at so high a level for over a quarter of a century was doubtless due to the fact that there was a long, self-imposed close season, during which the whales were quite unmolested. Nothing

in the migratory habits of this whale, so far as has ever been observed, would have prevented a profitable fishing all the year round; but custom, stronger even than profit, ordained that whale-ships should never stay too long upon one fishing-ground, but move on farther until the usual round had been made, unless the vessel were filled in the mean time.

Of course, there are whales whose habits lead them at certain seasons, for breeding purposes, to frequent various groups of islands, but the cachalot seems to be quite impartial in his preferences; if he 'uses' around certain waters, he is just as likely to be found there in July as January.

The Bonins, too, form an ideal calling-place, from the whaling captain's point of view. Peel Island, the principal one of the cluster, has a perfect harbour in Port Lloyd, where a vessel can not only lie in comfort, sheltered from almost every wind that blows, but where provisions, wood, and water are plentiful. There is no inducement, or indeed room for desertion, and the place is healthy. It is colonized by Japs from the kingdom so easily reached to the westward, and the busy little people, after their manner, make a short stay very agreeable.

Once clear of the southern end of Formosa we had quite a rapid run to the Bonins, carrying a press of sail day and night, as the skipper was anxious to arrive there on account of his recent injuries. He was still very lame, and he feared that some damage might have been done to him of which he was ignorant. Besides, it was easy to see that he did not altogether like anybody else being in charge of his ship, no matter how good they were. Such was the expedition we made that we arrived at Port Lloyd twelve days after clearing up our last whale. Very beautiful indeed the islands appeared, with their bold, steep sides clad in richest green, or, where no vegetation appeared, worn into a thousand fantastic shapes by the sea or the mountain torrents carving away the lava of which they were all composed. For the whole of the islands were volcanic, and Port Lloyd itself is nothing more than the crater of a vast volcano, which in some tremendous convulsion of nature has sunk from its former high estate low enough to become a haven for ships.

I have said that it was a perfect harbour, but there is no doubt that getting in or out requires plenty of nerve as well as seamanship. There was so little room, and the eddying flaws of wind under the high land were so baffling, that at various times during our passage in it appeared as if nothing could prevent us from getting stuck upon some of the adjacent hungry-looking coral reefs. Nothing of the kind happened, however, and we came comfortably to an anchor near three other whale-ships which were already there. They were the *Diego Ramirez*, of Nantucket; the

*Coronel*, of Providence, Rhode Island; and the *Grampus*, of New Bedford. These were the first whale-ships we had yet seen, and it may be imagined how anxious we felt to meet men with whom we could compare notes and exchange yarns. It might be, too, that we should get some news of that world which, as far as we were concerned, might as well have been at the other extremity of the solar system for the last year, so completely isolated had we been.

The sails were hardly fast before a boat from each of the ships was alongside with their respective skippers on board. The extra exertion necessary to pilot the ship in had knocked the old man up, in his present weak state, and he had gone below for a short rest; so the three visitors dived down into the stuffy cabin, all anxious to interview the latest comer. Considerate always, Mr. Count allowed us to have the remainder of the day to ourselves, so we set about entertaining our company. It was no joke twelve of them coming upon us all at once, and babel ensued for a short time. They knew the system too well to expect refreshments, so we had not to apologize for having nothing to set before them. They had not come, however, for meat and drink, but for talk. And talk we did, sometimes altogether, sometimes rationally; but I doubt whether any of us had ever enjoyed talking so much before.

## 14

*Liberty Day — and After*

THERE IS generally current among seamen a notion that all masters of ships are bound by law to give their crews twenty-four hours' liberty and a portion of their wages to spend every three months, if they are in port. I have never heard any authority quoted for this, and do not know what foundation there is for such a belief, although the practice is usually adhered to in English ships. But American whale-ships apparently know no law, except the will of their commanders, whose convenience is always the first consideration. Thus, we had now been afloat for well over a year, during which time, except for our foraging excursions at the Cocos and Aldabra, we had certainly known no liberty for a whole day.

Our present port being one where it was impossible to desert without the certainty of prompt recapture, with subsequent suffering altogether disproportionate to the offence, we were told that one watch at a time would be allowed their liberty for a day. So we of the port watch made our simple preparations, received twenty-five cents each, and were turned adrift on the beach to enjoy ourselves. We had our liberty, but we didn't know what to do with it. There was a native town and a couple of low grogeries

kept by Chinamen, where some of my shipmates promptly invested a portion of their wealth in some horrible liquor, the smell of which was enough to make an ordinary individual sick. There was no place apparently where one could get a meal, so that the prospect of our stay ashore lasting a day did not seem very great. I was fortunate enough, however, to foregather with a Scotchman who was a beach-comber, and consequently 'knew the ropes.' I dare say he was an unmitigated blackguard whenever he got the chance, but he was certainly on his best behaviour with me. He took me into the country a bit to see the sights, which were such as most of the Pacific islands afford. Wonderful indeed were the fantastic rocks, twisted into innumerable grotesque shapes, and, along the shores, hollowed out into caverns of all sizes, some large enough to shelter an army. He was quite familiar with the natives, understanding enough of their queer lingo to get along. By his friendly aid we got some food—yams, and fish cooked in native fashion, *i.e.* in heated holes in the ground, for which the friendly Kanakas would take no payment, although they looked murderous enough to be cannibals. It does not do to go by looks always.

Well, after a long ramble, the Scotchman and I laid our weary bodies down in the shade of a big rock, and had a grand sleep, waking up again a little before sunset. We hastened down to the beach off the town, where all my watchmates were sitting in a row, like lost sheep, waiting to be taken on board again. They had had enough of liberty; indeed, such liberty as that was hardly worth having. It seems hardly credible, but we were actually glad to get on board again, it was so miserable ashore. The natives were most unsociable at the port, and we could not make ourselves understood, so there was not much fun to be had. Even those who were inclined to drink had too little for a spree, which I was not sorry for, since doubtless a very unpleasant reception would have awaited them had they come on board drunk.

Next day the starboard watch went on liberty, while we who had received our share were told off to spend the day wooding and watering. In this most pleasant of occupations (when the weather is fine) I passed a much more satisfactory time than when wandering about with no objective, an empty pocket, and a hungry belly. No foremast hand has ever enjoyed his opportunities of making the acquaintance of his various visiting places more than I have; but the circumstances attendant upon one's leave must be a little favourable, or I would much rather stay aboard and fish. Our task was over for the day, a goodly store of wood and casks of water having been shipped. We were sitting down to supper, when, in answer to a hail from the beach, we were ordered to fetch the liberty men. When we got to them, there was a pretty how-d'ye-do.

All of them were more or less drunk, some exceedingly quarrelsome. Now, Mistah Jones was steering our boat, looking as little like a man to take sauce from a drunken sailor as you could imagine. Most of the transformed crowd ya-hooing, on the beach had felt the weight of his shoulder-of-mutton fist, yet so utterly had prudence forsaken them that, before we came near them, they were abusing him through all the varied gamut of filthy language they possessed. My democratic sentiments are deeply seated, but I do believe in authority, and respect for it being rigidly enforced, so this uncalled-for scene upset me, making me feel anxious that the gibbering fools might get a lesson. They got one.

Goliath stood like a tower, his eyes alone betraying the fierce anger boiling within. When we touched the beach, his voice was mild and gentle as a child's, his movements calm and deliberate. As soon as we had beached the boat he stepped ashore, and in two strides was in the middle of the snarling group. Further parley ceased at once. Snatching the loudest of them by the breast of his shirt with his right hand, another one by the collar with his left, he flung himself backwards towards the boat, knocking the interveners right and left. But a protruding fragment of rock caught his heel, bringing him with his captives to the ground in a writhing mass. The rest, maddened beyond restraint of fear, flung themselves upon the prostrate man, the glimmer of more than one knife-blade appearing. Two of us from the boat—one with the tiller, the other brandishing a paddle—rushed to the rescue; but before we arrived the giant had heaved off his assailants, and, with no other weapons than his bare hands, was doing terrific execution among them. Not knowing, I suppose, whether we were friendly to him or not, he shouted to us to keep away, nor dare to interfere. There was no need. Disregarding such trifles as a few superficial cuts—not feeling them perhaps—he so unmercifully mauled that crowd that they howled again for mercy. The battle was brief and bloody. Before hostilities had lasted five minutes, six of the aggressors were stretched insensible; the rest, comprising as many more, were pleading for mercy, completely sober. Such prowess on the part of one man against twelve seems hardly credible; but it must be remembered that Goliath fought, with all the moral force of the ship's officers behind him, against a disorganized crowd without backbone, who would never have dared to face him but for the temporary mania induced by the stuff they had drunk. It was a conflict between a lion and a troop of jackals, whereof the issue was never in doubt as long as lethal weapons were wanting.

Standing erect among the cowering creatures, the great negro looked every inch a mediæval hero. In a stern voice he bade his

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

subjugated enemies to get into the boat, assisting those to do so who were too badly hurt to rise. Then we shoved off for the ship—a sorrowful gang indeed.

As I bent to my oar, I felt very sorry for what had happened. Here were half the crew guilty of an act of violence upon an officer, which, according to the severe code under which we lived, merited punishment as painful as could be inflicted, and lasting for the rest of the voyage. Whatever form that punishment might take, those of us who were innocent would be almost equal sufferers with the others, because discrimination in the treatment between watch and watch is always difficult, and in our case it was certain that it would not be attempted. Except as regarded physical violence, we might all expect to share alike. Undoubtedly things looked very unpleasant. My gloomy cogitations were abruptly terminated by the order to 'unrow'—we were alongside. Somehow or other all hands managed to scramble on board, and assist in hoisting the boat up.

As soon as she was secured we slunk away forward, but we had hardly got below before a tremendous summons from Goliath brought us all aft again at the double quick. Most of the fracas had been witnessed from the ship, so that but a minute or two was needed to explain how or why it had begun. Directly that explanation had been supplied by Mistah Jones, the order was issued for the culprits to appear.

I have before noticed how little love was lost between the skipper and his officers, Goliath having even once gone so far as to give me a very emphatic opinion of his about the 'old man' of a most unflattering nature. And had such a state of things existed on board an English ship, the crew would simply have taken charge, for they would have seen the junior officers flouted, snubbed, and jeered at; and, of course, what they saw the captain do, they would not be slow to improve on. Many a promising young officer's career has been blighted in this way by the feminine spite of a foolish man unable to see that if the captain shows no respect to his officers, neither will the crew, nor obedience either.

But in an American ship, so long as an officer remains an officer, he must be treated as such by every man, under pain of prompt punishment. Yankee skippers have far too much *nous* to allow their hands to grow saucy in consequence of division among the after-guard. So now a sort of court-martial was held upon the unfortunates who had dared to attack Goliath, at which that sable hero might have been the apple of Captain Slocum's eye, so solicitous was he of Mistah Jones' honour and the reparation to be made.

This sort of thing was right in his line. Naturally cruel, he seemed to thoroughly enjoy himself in the prospect of making human



beings twist and writhe in pain. Nor would he be baulked of a jot of his pleasure.

Goliath approached him, and muttered a few words, meant, I felt sure, to appease him by letting him know how much they had suffered at his strong hands; but he turned upon the negro with a savage curse, bidding him be silent. Then every one of the culprits was stripped, and secured to the lash-rail by the wrists; scourges were made of cotton fish-line, knotted at intervals, and secured to a stout handle; the harpooners were told off as executioners, and the flogging began. Perhaps it was necessary for the maintenance of discipline—certainly it was trivial compared with the practice, till recently, in our own army and navy; but I am glad to say that, compelled to witness it, I felt quite sick—physically sick—trembling so in every limb that my legs would not support me. It was not fear, for I had nothing to fear had I been ever such a coward. Whatever it was, I am not sorry either to have felt it or to own it, even while I fully admit that for some forms of wickedness nothing but the lash seems adequate punishment.

Some of the victims fainted, not being in the best condition at the outset for undergoing so severe a trial; but all were treated alike, buckets of salt water being flung over them. This drastic reviver, while adding to their pain, brought them all into a state of sufficient activity to get forward when they were released. Smarting and degraded, all their temporary bravado effectually banished, they were indeed pitiable objects, their deplorable state all the harder to bear from its contrast to our recent pleasure when we entertained the visiting crews.

Having completed our quantum of wood, water, and fresh provisions for the officers, we got under way again for the fishing grounds. I did not see how we could hope for a successful season, knowing the utterly despondent state of the crew, which even affected the officers, who, not so callous or cruel as the skipper, seemed to be getting rather tired of the constant drive and kick, now the normal condition of affairs. But the skipper's vigilance was great. Whether he noted any sign of slackness or indifference on the part of his coadjutors or not, of course I cannot say, but he certainly seemed to put more vigour into his attentions than had been his wont, and so kept everybody up to the mark.

Hitherto we had always had our fishing to ourselves; we were now to see something of the ways of other men employed in the same manner. For though the general idea or plan of campaign against the whales is the same in all American whalers, every ship has some individual peculiarity of tactics, which, needless to say, are always far superior to those of any other ship. When we commenced our cruise on this new ground, there were seven whalers

in sight, all quite as keen on the chase as ourselves, so that I anticipated considerable sport of the liveliest kind should we 'raise' whales with such a fleet close at hand.

But for a whole week we saw nothing but a grampus or so, a few loitering finbacks, and an occasional lean humpback bull certainly not worth chasing. On the seventh afternoon, however, I was in the main crow's-nest with the chief, when I noticed a ship to windward of us alter her course, keeping away three or four points on an angle that would presently bring her across our bows a good way ahead. I was getting pretty well versed in the tricks of the trade now, so I kept mum, but strained my eyes in the direction for which the other ship was steering. The chief was looking astern at some finbacks, the look-out men forward were both staring to leeward, thus for a minute or so I had a small arc of the horizon to myself. The time was short, but it sufficed, and for the first time that voyage I had the privilege of 'raising' a sperm whale. My voice quivered with excitement as I uttered the war-whoop, 'Ah blo-o-o-w!' Round spun the mate on his heel, while the hands clustered like bees roused from their hive. 'Where away—where?' gasped the mate. And I pointed to a spot about half a point on the lee bow, at the same time calling his attention to the fact that the stranger to windward was keeping away. In answer to the skipper's hurried queries from below, Mr. Count gave him the general outline of affairs, to which he replied by crowding every stitch of canvas on the vessel that was available.

The spout I had seen was a good ten miles off, and, for the present, seemed to belong to a 'lone' whale, as it was the only one visible. There was a good breeze blowing, as much, in fact, as we could carry all sail to, the old bark making a tremendous commotion as she blundered along under the unusual press of canvas. In the excitement of the race all our woes were forgotten; we only thought of the possibility of the ship getting there first. We drew gradually nearer to the stranger, who, like us, was carrying all the sail he had got, but, being able to go a point or two free, was outsailing us.

It was anybody's race as yet, though, when we heard the skipper's hail, "Way down from aloft!" as he came up to take our place. The whale had sounded, apparently heading to leeward, so that the weather-gage held by our rival was not much advantage to him now. We ran on for another two miles, then shortened sail, and stood by to lower away the moment he should re-appear. Meanwhile another ship was working up from to leeward, having evidently noted our movements, or else, like the albatross, 'smelt whale,' no great distance to windward of him. Waiting for that whale to rise was one of the most exciting experiences we had gone

through as yet, with two other ships so near. Everybody's nerves seemed strung up to concert pitch, and it was quite a relief when from half a dozen throats at once burst the cry, 'There she white-waters! Ah blo-o-o-w!' Not a mile away, dead to leeward of us, quietly beating the water with the flat of his flukes, as if there was no such thing in the watery world as a whale-ship. Splash! almost simultaneously went the four boats. Out we shot from the ship, all on our mettle; for was not the skipper's eye upon us from his lofty eyrie, as well as the crew of the other ship, now not more than a mile away? We seemed a terrible time getting the sails up, but the officers dared not risk our willingness to pull while they could be independent of us.

By the time we were fairly off, the other ship's boats were coming like the wind, so that eight boats were now converging upon the unconscious monster. We fairly flew over the short, choppy sea, getting drenched with the flying spray, but looking out far more keenly at the other boats than at the whale. Up we came to him, Mr. Count's boat to the left, the other mate's boat to the right. Almost at the same moment the irons flew from the hands of the rival harpooners; but while ours was buried to the hitches in the whale's side, the other man's just ploughed up the skin on the animal's back, as it passed over him and pierced our boat close behind the harpooner's leg. Not seeing what had happened to his iron, or knowing that we were fast, the other harpooner promptly hurled his second iron, which struck solidly. It was a very pretty tangle, but our position was rather bad. The whale between us was tearing the bowels of the deep up in his rage and fear; we were struggling frantically to get our sail down; and at any moment that wretched iron through our upper strake might tear a plank out of us. Our chief, foaming at the mouth with rage and excitement, was screeching inarticulate blasphemy at the other mate, who, not knowing what was the matter, was yelling back all his copious vocabulary of abuse. I felt very glad the whale was between us, or there would surely have been murder done. At last, out drops the iron, leaving a jagged hole you could put your arm through. Wasn't Mr. Count mad? I really thought he would split with rage, for it was impossible for us to go on with that hole in our bilge. The second mate came alongside and took our line as the whale was just commencing to sound, thus setting us free. We made at once for the other ship's 'fast' boat, and the compliments that had gone before were just casual conversation to what filled the air with dislocated language now. Presently both the champions cooled down a bit from want of breath, and we got our case stated. It was received with a yell of derision from the other side as a splendid effort of lying on our part; because the first ship fast

claims the whale, and such a prize as this one we were quarrelling about was not to be tamely yielded.

However, as reason asserted her sway over Mr. Count, he quieted down, knowing full well that the state of the line belonging to his rival would reveal the truth when the whale rose again. Therefore we returned to the ship, leaving our three boats busy, waiting the whale's pleasure to rise again. When the skipper heard what had happened, he had his own boat manned, proceeding himself to the battle-field in expectation of complications presently. By the time he arrived upon the scene there were two more boats lying by, which had come up from the third ship, mentioned as working up from to leeward. 'Pretty fine ground this's got ter be!' growled the old man. 'Caint strike whale 'thout bein' crowded out uv yer own propputty by a gang ov bunco steerers like this. Shall hev ter quit it, en keep a pawnshop.'

And still the whale kept going steadily down, down, down. Already he was on the second boat's lines, and taking them out faster than ever. Had we been alone, this persistence on his part, though annoying, would not have mattered much; but, with so many others in company, the possibilities of complication, should we need to slip our end, were numerous. The ship kept near, and Mr. Count, seeing how matters were going, had hastily patched his boat, returning at once with another tub of line. He was but just in time to bend on, when to our great delight we saw the end slip from our rival's boat. This in no wise terminated his lien on the whale, supposing he could prove that he struck first, but it got him out of the way for the time.

Meanwhile we were running line faster than ever. There was an enormous length attached to the animal now—some twelve thousand feet—the weight of which was very great, to say nothing of the many 'drogues' or 'stopwaters' attached to it at intervals. Judge, then, of my surprise when a shout of 'Blo-o-o-w!' called my attention to the whale himself just breaking water about half a mile away. It was an awkward predicament; for if we let go our end, the others would be on the whale immediately; if we held on, we should certainly be dragged below in a twinkling; and our disengaged boats could do nothing, for they had no line. But the difficulty soon settled itself. Out ran our end, leaving us bare of line as pleasure skiffs. The newcomer, who had been prowling near, keeping a close watch upon us, saw our boat jump up when released from the weight. Off he flew like an arrow to the labouring leviathan, now a 'free fish,' except for such claims as the two first-comers had upon it, which claims are legally assessed, where no dispute arises. In its disabled condition, dragging so enormous a weight of line, it was but a few minutes before the fresh boat

was fast, while we looked on helplessly, boiling with impotent rage. All that we could now hope for was the salvage of some of our line, a mile and a half of which, inextricably mixed up with about the same length of our rival's, was towing astern of the fast-expiring cachalot.

So great had been the strain upon that hardly-used animal that he did not go into his usual 'flurry,' but calmly expired without the faintest struggle. In the mean time two of our boats had been sent on board again to work the ship, while the skipper proceeded to try his luck in the recovery of his gear. On arriving at the dead whale, however, we found that he had rolled over and over beneath the water so many times that the line was fairly frapped round him, and the present possessors were in no mood to allow us the privilege of unrolling it.

During the conversation we had drawn very near the carcass, so near, in fact, that one hand was holding the boat alongside the whale's 'small' by a bight of the line. I suppose the skipper's eagle eye must have caught sight of the trailing part of the line streaming beneath, for suddenly he plunged overboard, reappearing almost immediately with the line in his hand. He scrambled into the boat with it, cutting it from the whale at once, and starting his boat's crew hauling in.

Then there was a hubbub again. The captain of the *Narragansett*, our first rival, protested vigorously against our monopoly of the line; but in grim silence our skipper kept on, taking no notice of him, while we steadily hauled. Unless he of the *Narragansett* choose to fight for what he considered his rights, there was no help for him. And there was something in our old man's appearance eminently calculated to discourage aggression of any kind.

At last, disgusted apparently with the hopeless turn affairs had taken, the *Narragansett's* boats drew off, and returned on board their ship. Two of our boats had by this time accumulated a mountainous coil of line each, with which we returned to our own vessel, leaving the skipper to visit the present holder of the whale, the skipper of the *John Hampden*.

What arrangements they made, or how they settled the *Narragansett's* claim between them, I never knew, but I dare say there was a costly law-suit about it in New Bedford years after.

This was not very encouraging for a start, nor did the next week see us do any better. Several times we saw other ships with whales alongside, but we got no show at all. Now, I had hoped a great deal from our cruise on these grounds, because I had heard whispers of a visit to the icy Sea of Okhotsk, and the prospect was to me a horrible one. I never did take any stock in Arctic work. But if we made a good season on the Japan grounds, we should not go

north, but gradually work down the Pacific again, on the other side, cruising as we went.

Day after day went by without any fresh capture or even sight of fish, until I began to believe that the stories I had heard of the wonderful fecundity of the Coast of Japan waters were fable without foundation, in fact. Had I known what sort of fishing our next bout would be, I should not have been so eager to sight whales again. If this be not a platitude of the worst kind, I don't know the meaning of the word; but, after all, platitudes have their uses, especially when you want to state a fact baldly.

## 15

*Which comes uncomfortably near being the Last*

ALL unversed as I am in the finer shades of literary craftsmanship, there is great uncertainty in my mind whether it is good or bad 'art' to anticipate your next chapter by foreshadowing its contents; but whether good or bad art, the remembrance of my miseries on the eventful occasion I wish to describe was so strong upon me as I wrote the last few lines of the previous chapter that I just had to let those few words leak out.

Through all the vicissitudes of this strange voyage I had hitherto felt pretty safe, and as the last thing a man anticipates (if his digestion is all right) is the possibility of coming to grief himself, while fully prepared to see everybody else go under, so I had got to think that whoever got killed I was not to be—a very pleasing sentiment, and one that carries a man far, enabling him to face dangers with a light heart which otherwise would make a nerveless animal of him.

In this optimistic mood, then, I gaily flung myself into my place in the mate's boat one morning, as we were departing in chase of a magnificent cachalot that had been raised just after breakfast. There were no other vessels in sight—much to our satisfaction—the wind was light, with a cloudless sky, and the whale was dead to leeward of us. We sped along at a good rate towards our prospective victim, who was, in his leisurely enjoyment of life, calmly lolling on the surface, occasionally lifting his enormous tail out of water and letting it fall flat upon the surface with a boom audible for miles.

We were, as usual, first boat; but, much to the mate's annoyance, when we were a short half-mile from the whale, our main-sheet parted. It became immediately necessary to roll the sail up, lest its flapping should alarm the watchful monster, and this delayed us sufficiently to allow the other boats to shoot ahead of us. Thus

the second mate got fast some seconds before we arrived on the scene, seeing which we furled sail, unshipped the mast, and went in on him with the oars only. At first the proceedings were quite of the usual character, our chief wielding his lance in most brilliant fashion, while not being fast to the animal allowed us much greater freedom in our evolutions; but that fatal habit of the mate's—of allowing his boat to take care of herself so long as he was getting in some good home-thrusts—once more asserted itself. Although the whale was exceedingly vigorous, churning the sea into yeasty foam over an enormous area, there we wallowed close to him, right in the middle of the turmoil, actually courting disaster.

He had just settled down for a moment, when, glancing over the gunwale, I saw his tail, like a vast shadow, sweeping away from us towards the second mate, who was laying off the other side of him. Before I had time to think, the mighty mass of gristle leapt into the sunshine, curved back from us like a huge bow. Then with a roar it came at us, released from its tension of Heaven knows how many tons. Full on the broadside it struck us, sending every soul but me flying out of the wreckage as if fired from catapults. I did not go because my foot was jammed somehow in the well of the boat, but the wrench nearly pulled my thigh-bone out of its socket. I had hardly released my foot, when, towering above me, came the colossal head of the great creature, as he ploughed through the bundle of *débris* that had just been a boat. There was an appalling roar of water in my ears, and darkness that might be felt all around. Yet, in the midst of it all, one thought predominated as clearly as if I had been turning it over in my mind in the quiet of my bunk aboard—‘What if he should swallow me?’ Nor to this day can I understand how I escaped the portals of his gullet, which of course gaped wide as a church door. But the agony of holding my breath soon overpowered every other feeling and thought, till just as something was going to snap inside my head I rose to the surface. I was surrounded by a welter of bloody froth, which made it impossible for me to see; but oh, the air was sweet!

I struck out blindly, instinctively, although I could feel so strong an eddy that voluntary progress was out of the question. My hand touched and clung to a rope, which immediately towed me in some direction—I neither knew nor cared whither. Soon the notion ceased, and, with a seaman's instinct, I began to haul myself along by the rope I grasped, although no definite idea was in my mind as to where it was attached. Presently I came butt up against something solid, the feel of which gathered all my scattered wits into a compact knob of dread. It was the whale! ‘Any port in a storm,’ I murmured, beginning to haul away again on my

friendly line. By dint of hard work I pulled myself right up the sloping, slippery bank of blubber, until I reached the iron, which as luck would have it, was planted in that side of the carcass now uppermost. Carcass I said—well, certainly I had no idea of there being any life remaining within the vast mass beneath me, yet I had hardly time to take a couple of turns round myself with the rope (or whale-line, as I had proved it to be), when I felt the great animal quiver all over, and begin to forge ahead. I was now composed enough to remember that help could not be far away, and that my rescue, providing that I could keep above water, was but a question of a few minutes. But I was hardly prepared for the whale's next move. Being very near his end, the boat, or boats had drawn off a bit, I supposed, for I could see nothing of them. Then I remembered the flurry. Almost at the same moment it began; and there was I, who with fearful admiration had so often watched the titanic convulsions of a dying cachalot, actually involved in them. The turns were off my body, but I was able to twist a couple of turns round my arms, which, in case of his sounding, I could readily let go.

Then all was lost in roar and rush, as of the heart of some mighty cataract, during which I was sometimes above, sometimes beneath the water, but always clinging, with every ounce of energy still left, to the line. Now, one thought was uppermost—'What if he should breach?' I had seen them do so when in flurry, leaping full twenty feet in the air. Then I prayed.

Quickly as all the preceding changes had passed came perfect peace. There I lay, still alive, but so weak that, although I could feel the turns slipping off my arms, and knew that I should slide off the slope of the whale's side into the sea if they did, I could make no effort to secure myself. Everything then passed away from me, just as if I had gone to sleep.

I do not at all understand how I kept my position, nor how long, but I awoke to the blessed sound of voices, and saw the second mate's boat alongside. Very gently and tenderly they lifted me into the boat, although I could hardly help screaming with agony when they touched me, so bruised and broken up did I feel. My arms must have been nearly torn from their sockets, for the strand of the whale-line had cut deep into their flesh with the strain upon it, while my thigh was swollen enormously from the blow I received at the onset. Mr. Cruce was the most surprised man I think I ever saw. For full ten minutes he stared at me with wide-open eyes. When at last he spoke, it was with difficulty, as if wanting words to express his astonishment. At last he blurted out, 'Whar you bin all de time, ennyhaow? 'Cawse ef you bin hangin' on to dat a wale ev' sence you boat smash, w'y de debbil you hain't all te



bits, hey?' I smiled feebly, but was too weak to talk, and presently went off again into a dead faint.

When I recovered, I was snug in my bunk aboard, but aching in every joint, and as sore as if I had been pounded with a club until I was bruised all over. During the day Mr. Count was kind enough to pay me a visit. With his usual luck, he had escaped without the slightest injury; neither was any other member of the boat's crew the worse for the ducking but myself. He told me that the whale was one of the largest he had ever seen, and as fat as butter. The boat was an entire loss, so completely smashed to pieces that nothing of her or her gear had been recovered. After spending about a quarter of an hour with me, he left me considerably cheered up, promising to look after me in the way of food, and also to send me some books. He told me that I need not worry myself about my inability to be at work, because the old man was not unfavourably disposed towards me, which piece of news gave me a great deal of comfort.

When my poor, weary shipmates came below from their heavy toil of cutting in, they were almost inclined to be envious of my comfort—small blame to them—though I would gladly have taken my place among them again, could I have got rid of my hurts. But I was condemned to lie there for nearly three weeks before I was able to get about once more. In my sleep I would undergo the horrible anticipation of sliding down that awful, cavernous mouth over again, often waking with a shriek and drenched with sweat.

While I lay there, three whales were caught, all small cows, and I was informed that the skipper was getting quite disgusted with the luck. At last I managed to get on deck, quite a different-looking man to when I went below, and feeling about ten years older. I found the same sullen quiet reigning that I had noticed several times before when we were unfortunate. I fancied that the skipper looked more morose and savage than ever, though of me, to my great relief, he took not the slightest notice.

The third day after my return to duty we sighted whales again. We lowered three boats as promptly as usual; but when within about half a mile of the 'pod' some slight noise in one of the boats gallied them, and away they went in the wind's eye, it blowing a stiffish breeze at the time. It was from the first evidently a hopeless task to chase them, but we persevered until recalled to the ship, dead beat with fatigue. I was not sorry, for my recent adventure seemed to have made quite a coward of me, so much so that an unpleasant gnawing at the pit of my stomach as we neared them almost made me sick. I earnestly hoped that so inconvenient a feeling would speedily leave me, or I should be but a poor creature in a boat.

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

In passing, I would like to refer to the wonderful way in which these whales realize at a great distance, if the slightest sound be made, the presence of danger. I do not use the word 'hear' because so abnormally small are their organs of hearing, the external opening being quite difficult to find, that I do not believe they *can* hear at all well. But I firmly believe they possess another sense by means of which they are able to detect any unusual vibration of the waves of either air or sea at a far greater distance than it would be possible for them to hear. Whatever this power may be which they possess, all whalers are well acquainted with their exercise of it, and always take most elaborate precautions to render their approach to a whale noiseless.

Our extraordinary want of success at last so annoyed the skipper that he determined to quit the ground and go north. The near approach of the open season in those regions probably hastened his decision, but I learned from Goliath that he had always been known as a most fortunate man among the 'bowheads,' as the great *Mysticetæ* of that part of the Arctic seas are called by the Americans. Not that there is any difference, as far as I have been able to ascertain, between them and the 'right' whale of the Greenland seas, but from some caprice of nomenclature for which there is no accounting.

So in leisurely fashion we worked north, keeping, of course, a bright look-out all the way for straggling cachalots, but not seeing any. From scraps of information that in some mysterious fashion leaked out, we learned that we were bound to the Okhotsk Sea, it being no part of the skipper's intentions to go prowling around Behrings Sea, where he believed the whales to be few and far between.

It may be imagined that we of the crew were not at all pleased with this intelligence, our life being, we considered, sufficiently miserable without the addition of extreme cold, for we did not realize that in the Arctic regions during summer the cold is by no means unbearable, and our imagination pictured a horrible waste of perpetual ice and snow, in the midst of which we should be compelled to freeze while dodging whales through the crevices of the floes. But whether our pictures of the prospects that awaited us were caricatures or no made not the slightest difference. 'Growl you may, but go you must' is an old sea-jingle of the truest ring; but, while our going was inevitable, growling was a luxury none of us dare indulge in.

We had by no means a bad passage to the Kuriles, which form a natural barrier enclosing the immense area of the Okhotsk Sea from the vast stretch of the Pacific. Around this great chain of islands the navigation is exceedingly difficult, and dangerous as

well, from the ever-varying currents as from the frequent fogs and sudden storms. But these impediments to swift and safe navigation are made light of by the whalemén, who, as I feel never weary of remarking, are the finest navigators in the world where speed is not the first consideration.

The most peculiar features of these inhospitable shores to a seaman are the vast fields of seaweed surrounding them all, which certainly helps to keep the sea down during gales, but renders navigation most difficult on account of its concealment of hidden dangers. These islands are aptly named, the word 'Kurile' being Kamschatkan for smoke; and whether it be regarded as given in consequence of the numerous volcanoes which pour their fumes into the air, or the all-prevailing fog fostered by the Kuro Siwo, or Japanese counterpart of the Gulfstream, the designation is equally appropriate.

We entered the Okhotsk Sea by the Nadeshda Channel, so-named after Admiral Krusenstern's ship, which was the first civilized vessel that passed through its turbulent waters. It separates the islands Rashau and Mataua by about twenty miles, yet so conflicting and violent are the currents which eddy and swirl in all parts of it, that without a steady, strong, fair wind it is most dangerous to a sailing vessel. Thenceforward the navigation was free from difficulty, or at least none that we could recognize as such, so we gave all our attention to the business which brought us there.

Scarcely any change was needed in our equipment, except the substitution of longer harpoons for those we had been using, and the putting away of the bomb-guns. These changes were made because the blubber of the bowhead is so thick that ordinary harpoons will not penetrate beyond it to the muscle, which, unless they do, renders them liable to draw, upon a heavy strain. As for the bombs, Yankees hold the mysticæ in such supreme contempt that none of them would dream of wasting so expensive a weapon as a bomb upon them. I was given to understand by my constant crony, Mistah Jones, that there was no more trouble in killing a bowhead than in slaughtering a sheep; and that while it was quite true that accidents *did* occur, they were entirely due to the carelessness or clumsiness of the whalemén, and not in any way traceable to a desire on the victim's part to do any one harm.

The sea was little encumbered with ice, it being now late in June, so that our progress was not at all impeded by the few soft, brashy floes that we encountered, none of them hard enough to do a ship's hull any damage. In most places the sea was sufficiently shallow to permit of our anchoring. For this purpose we used a large kedge, with stout hawser for cable, never furling all the sails in case of a

strong breeze suddenly springing up, which would cause us to drag. This anchoring was very comfortable. Besides allowing us to get much more rest than when on other cruising-grounds, we were able to catch enormous quantities of fish, mostly salmon, of which there were no less than fourteen varieties. So plentiful were these splendid fish that we got quite critical in our appreciation of them, very soon finding that one kind, known as the 'nerker,' was far better flavoured than any of the others. But as the daintiest food palls the quickest, it was not long before we got tired of salmon, and wished most heartily for beef.

Much fun has been made of the discontent of sailors with food which is considered a luxury ashore, and wonder expressed that if, as we assert, the ordinary dietary of the seaman be so bad, he should be so ready to rebel when fed with delicacies. But in justice to the sailor, it ought to be remembered that the daintiest food may be rendered disgusting by bad cookery, such as is the rule on board merchant ships. 'God sends meat, but the devil sends cooks' is a proverb which originated on board ship, and no one who has ever served any time in a ship's fore-castle would deny that it is abundantly justified. Besides which, even good food well cooked of one kind only, served many times in succession, becomes very trying, only the plainest foods, such as bread, rice, potatoes, etc., retaining their command of the appetite continually.

I remember once, when upon the Coromandel coast in a big Greenock ship, we found fowls very cheap. At Bimlipatam the captain bought two or three hundred, which, as we had no coops, were turned loose on deck. We had also at the same time prowling about the decks three goats, twenty pigs, and two big dogs.

Consequently the state of the ship was filthy, nor could all our efforts keep her clean. This farmyard condition of things was permitted to continue for about a week, when the officers got so tired of it, and the captain so annoyed at the frequent loss of fowls by their flying overboard, that the edict went forth to feed the foremast hands on poultry till further orders. Great was our delight at the news. Fowl for dinner represented to our imagination almost the apex of high living, only indulged in by such pampered children of fortune as the officers of ships or well-to-do people ashore.

When dinner-time arrived, we boys made haste to the galley with watering mouths, joyfully anticipating that rare delight of the sailor—a good 'feed.' The cook uncovered his coppers, plunged his tormentors therein, and produced such a succession of ugly corpses of fowls as I had never seen before. To each man a whole one was allotted, and we bore the steaming hecatomb into the fore-castle. The boisterous merriment became hushed at our approach, and faces grew lengthy when the unwholesome aspect

of the 'treat' was revealed. Each man secured his bird, and commenced operations. But oh, the disappointment, *and* the bad words! What little flesh there was upon the framework of those unhappy fowls was like leather itself, and utterly flavourless. It could not well have been otherwise. The feathers had been simply scalded off, the heads chopped off, and bodies split open to facilitate drawing (I am sure I wonder the cook took the trouble to do that much), and thus prepared they were cast into a cauldron of boiling salt water. There, with the water fiercely bubbling, they were kept for an hour and a half, then pitchforked out into the mess kid and set before us. We simply could not eat them; no one but a Noumean Kanaka could, for his teeth are equal to husking a cocoa-nut, or chopping off a piece of sugar-cane as thick as your wrist.

After much heated discussion, it was unanimously resolved to protest at once against the substitution of such a fraud as this poultry for our legitimate rations of 'salt horse.' So, bearing the *dissecta membra* of our meal, the whole crowd marched aft, and requested an interview with the skipper. He came out of the cabin at once, saying, 'Well, boys, what's the matter?' The spokesman, a bald-headed Yankee, who had been bo'sun's mate of an American man-of-war, stepped forward and said, offering his kid, 'Jest have a look at that, sir.' The skipper looked, saying, inquiringly, 'Well?' 'D'yew think, sir,' said Nat, '*thet's* proper grub for men?' 'Proper grub! Why, you old sinner, you don't mean to say you're goin' to growl about havin' chicken for dinner?' 'Well, sir, it depends muchly upon the chicken. All I know is, that I've et some dam queer tack in my time, but sence I ben fishin' I never had no such bundles of sticks parcelled with leather served out to me. I *hev* et hoot—leastways gnawed it when I was cast away in a open boat for three weeks—but it wa'n't bad boot, as boots go. Now, if yew say that these things is boots, en thet it's necessary we should eat 'em, or starve, w'y, we'll think about it. But if yew call 'em chickens, 'n say you're doin' us a kindness by stoppin' our 'lowance of meat wile we're wrastlin' with 'em, then we say we don't feel obliged to yew, 'n 'll thank yew kindly to keep such lugsuries for verself, 'n give us wot we signed for.' A murmur of assent confirmed this burst of eloquence, which we all considered a very fine effort indeed. A moment's silence ensued; then the skipper burst out, 'I've often heard of such things, but hang me if I ever believed 'em till now! You ungrateful beggars! I'll see you get your whack, and no more, from this out. When you get any little extras aboard this ship agen, you'll be thankful for 'em; now I tell you.' 'All right, sir,' said Nat; 'so long as we don't hev to chaw any more of yer biled Bimly crows, I dessay we shall worry along as usual.'

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

And, as the Parliamentary reports say, the proceedings then terminated.

Now, suppose the skipper had told that story to some of his shore friends, how very funny the sailors' conduct would have been made to appear.

On another occasion long after, when I was mate of a barque loading mahogany in Tonalá, Mexico, the skipper thought he would practise economy by buying a turtle instead of beef. A large turtle was obtained for twenty-five cents, and handed over to the cook to be dealt with, particular instructions being given him as to the apportionment of the meat.

At eight bells there was a gathering of the men in front of the poop, and a summons for the captain. When he appeared, the usual stereotyped invitation to 'have a look at *that*, if you please, sir,' was uttered. The skipper was, I think, prepared for a protest, for he began to bluster immediately. 'Look here!' he bawled, 'I ain't goin' to 'ave any of your dam nonsense. You *want* somethin' to growl about, you do.' 'Well, Cap'n George,' said one of the men, 'you shorely don't think we k'n eat shells, do yer?' Just then I caught sight of the kid's contents, and could hardly restrain my indignation. For in a dirty heap, the sight of which might have pleased an Esquimaux, but was certainly enough to disgust any civilized man, lay the calipce, or under-shell of the turtle, hacked into irregular blocks. It had been simply boiled, and flung into the kid, an unclean, disgusting heap of shell, with pieces of dirty flesh attached in ragged lumps. But the skipper, red-faced and angry, answered, 'W'y, yer so-and-so iijts, that's wot the Lord Mayor of London gives about a guinea a hounce for w'en 'e feeds lords n' dooks. Only the haristocracy at 'ome get a charnce to stick their teeth in such grub as that. An' 'ere are you lot a-growlin' at 'avin' it for a change!' 'That's all right, cap'n,' said the man; 'bein' brort up ter such lugsuries, of corse *you* kin appreshyate it. So if yer keep it fer yer own eatin', an' giv us wot we signed for, we shall be werry much obliged.' 'Now, I ain't a-goin' to 'ave none o' *your* cheek, so you'd better git forrard. You can betcher life you won't get no more fresh messes this voy'ge.' So, with grumbling and ill-will on both sides, the conference came to an end. But I thought, and still think, that the mess set before those men, who had been working hard since six a.m., was unfit for the food of a good dog.

Out of my own experience I might give many other instances of the kind, but I hope these will suffice to show that Jack's growling is often justified, when both sides of the story are heard.

### ‘Bowhead’ Fishing

DAY and night being now only distinguishable by the aid of the clock, a constant look-out aloft was kept all through the twenty-four hours, watch and watch, but whales were apparently very scarce. We did a good deal of ‘pelagic’ sealing; that is, catching seals swimming. But the total number obtained was not great, for these creatures are only gregarious when at their rocky haunts during the breeding season, or among the ice just before that season begins. Our sealing, therefore, was only a way of passing the time in the absence of nobler game, to be abandoned at once with whales in sight.

It was on the ninth or tenth morning after our arrival on the grounds that a bowhead was raised, and two boats sent after him. It was my first sight of the great *Mysticetus*, and I must confess to being much impressed by his gigantic bulk. From the difference in shape, he looked much larger than the largest sperm whale we had yet seen, although we had come across some of the very biggest specimens of cachalot.

The contrast between the two animals is most marked, so much so, in fact, that one would hardly credit them with belonging to the same order. Popular ideas of the whale are almost invariably taken from the *Mysticetus*, so that the average individual generally defines a whale as a big fish which spouts water out of the top of his head, and cannot swallow a herring. Indeed, so lately as last year a popular M.P., writing to one of the religious papers, allowed himself to say that ‘science will not hear of a whale with a gullet capable of admitting anything larger than a man’s fist’—a piece of crass ignorance, which is also perpetrated in the appendix to a very widely-distributed edition of the Authorized Version of the Bible. This opinion, strangely enough, is almost universally held, although I trust that the admirable models now being shown in our splendid Natural History Museum at South Kensington will do much to remove it. Not so many people, perhaps, believe that a whale is a fish, instead of a mammal, but few indeed are the individuals who do not still think that a cetacean possesses a sort of natural fountain on the top of its head, whence, for some recondite reason, it ejects at regular intervals streams of water into the air.

But a whale can no more force water through its spiracle or blow-hole than you or I through our nostrils. It inhales, when at the surface, atmospheric air, and exhales breath like ours,

which, coming warm into a cooler medium, becomes visible, as does our breath on a frosty morning.

Now, the *Mysticetus* carries his nostrils on the summit of his head, or crown, the orifice being closed by a beautifully arranged valve when the animal is beneath the water. Consequently, upon coming to the surface to breathe, he sends up a jet of visible breath into the air some ten or twelve feet. The cachalot, on the other hand, has the orifice at the point of his square snout, the internal channel running in a slightly diagonal direction downwards, and back through the skull to the lungs. So when *he* spouts, the breath is projected forward diagonally, and, from some peculiarity which I do not pretend to explain, expends itself in a short, bushy tuft of vapour, very distinct from the tall vertical spout of the bowhead or right whale.

There was little or no wind when we sighted the individual I am now speaking of, so we did not attempt to set sail, but pulled straight for him 'head and head.' Strange as it may appear, the *Mysticetus*' best point of view is right behind, or 'in his wake,' as we say; it is therefore part of the code to approach him from right ahead, in which direction he cannot see at all. Some time before we reached him he became aware of our presence, showing by his uneasy actions that he had his doubts about his personal security. But before he had made up his mind what to do we were upon him, with our harpoons buried in his back. The difference in his behaviour to what we had so long been accustomed to was amazing. He did certainly give a lumbering splash or two with his immense flukes, but no one could possibly have been endangered by them. The water was so shallow that when he sounded it was but for a very few minutes; there was no escape for him that way. As soon as he returned to the surface he set off at his best gait, but that was so slow that we easily hauled up close alongside of him, holding the boats in that position without the slightest attempt to guard ourselves from reprisals on his part, while the officers searched his vitals with the lances as if they were probing a haystack.

Really, the whole affair was so tame that it was impossible to get up any fighting enthusiasm over it; the poor, unwieldy creature died meekly and quietly as an overgrown seal. In less than an hour from the time of leaving the ship we were ready to bring our prize alongside.

Upon coming up to the whale, sail was shortened, and as soon as the fluke-chain was passed we anchored. It was, I heard, our skipper's boast that he could 'skin a bowhead in forty minutes;' and although we were certainly longer than that, the celerity with which what seemed a gigantic task was accomplished was marvellous. Of course, it was all plain-sailing, very unlike the complicated and herculean task inevitable at the commencement of cutting-in a sperm whale.



Except for the head work, removing the blubber was effected in precisely the same way as in the case of the cachalot. There was a marked difference between the quantity of lard enveloping this whale and those we had hitherto dealt with. It was nearly double the thickness, besides being much richer in oil, which fairly dripped from it as we hoisted in the blanket-pieces. The upper jaw was removed for its long plates of whalebone or baleen—that valuable substance which alone makes it worth while nowadays to go after the *Mysticetus*, the price obtained for the oil being so low as to make it not worth while to fit out ships to go in search of it alone. ‘Trying-out’ the blubber, with its accompaniments, is carried on precisely as with the sperm whale. The resultant oil, when recent, is of a clear white, unlike the golden-tinted fluid obtained from the cachalot. As it grows stale it develops a nausious smell, which sperm does not, although the odour of the oil is otto of roses compared with the horrible mass of putridity landed from the tanks of a Greenland whaler at the termination of a cruise. For in those vessels, the fishing-time at their disposal being so brief, they do not wait to boil down the blubber, but, chopping it into small pieces, pass it below as it is into tanks, to be rendered down by the oil-mills ashore on the ship’s return.

This first bowhead yielded us eighteen tuns of oil and a ton of baleen, which made the catch about equal in value to that of a seven-tun cachalot. But the amount of labour and care necessary in order to thoroughly dry and cleanse the baleen was enormous; in fact, for months after we began the bowhead fishery there was almost always something being done with the wretched stuff—drying, scraping, etc.—which, as it was kept below, also necessitated hoisting it up on deck and getting it down again.

After this beginning, it was again a considerable time before we sighted any more; but when we did, there were quite a number of them—enough to employ all the boats with one each. I was out of the fun this time, being almost incapable of moving by reason of several boils on my legs—the result, I suppose, of a long abstinence from fresh vegetables, or anything to supply their place.

As it happened, however, I lost no excitement by remaining on board; for while all the boats were away a large bowhead rose near the ship, evidently being harassed in some way by enemies, which I could not at first see. He seemed quite unconscious of his proximity to the ship, though, and at last came so near that the whole performance was as visible as if it had been got up for my benefit. Three ‘killers’ were attacking him at once, like wolves worrying a bull, except that his motions were far less ‘lively’ than those of any bull would have been.

The ‘killer,’ or *Orca gladiator*, is a true whale, but, like the

cachalot, has teeth. He differs from that great cetacean, though in a most important particular; *i.e.* by having a complete set in both upper and lower jaws, like any other carnivore. For a carnivore indeed is he, the very wolf of the ocean, and enjoying, by reason of his extraordinary agility as well as comparative worthlessness commercially, complete immunity from attack by man. By some authorities he is thought to be identical with the grampus but whalers all consider the animals quite distinct. Not having had very long acquaintance with them both, I cannot speak emphatically upon this difference of opinion; so far as personal observation goes, I agree with the whalers in believing that there is much variation both of habits and shape between them.

But to return to the fight. The first inkling I got of what was really going on was the leaping of a killer high into the air by the side of the whale, and descending upon the victim's broad, smooth back with a resounding crash. I saw that the killer was provided with a pair of huge fins—one on his back, the other on his belly—which at first sight looked as if they were also weapons of offence. A little observation convinced me that they were fins only. Again and again the aggressor leaped into the air, falling each time on the whale's back, as if to beat him into submission.

The sea around foamed and boiled like a cauldron, so that it was only occasional glimpses I was able to catch of the two killers, until presently the worried whale lifted his head clear out of the surrounding smother, revealing the two furies hanging—one on either side—to his lips, as if endeavouring to drag his mouth open—which I afterwards saw was their principal object, as whenever during the tumult I caught sight of them, they were still in the same position. At last the tremendous and incessant blows, dealt by the most active member of the trio, seemed actually to have exhausted the immense vitality of the great bowhead, for he lay supine upon the surface. Then the three joined their forces, and succeeded in dragging open his cavernous mouth, into which they freely entered, devouring his tongue. This, then, had been their sole object, for as soon as they had finished their barbarous feast they departed, leaving him helpless and dying to fall an easy prey to our returning boats.

Thus, although the four whales captured by the boats had been but small, the day's take, augmented by so great a find, was a large one, and it was a long time before we got clear of the work it entailed.

From that time forward we saw no whales for six weeks, and, from the reports we received from two whalers we 'gammed,' it appeared that we might consider ourselves most fortunate in our catch, since they, who had been longer on the ground than ourselves, had only one whale apiece.

In consequence of this information, Captain Slocum decided to go south again, and resume the sperm whaling in the North Pacific, near the line—at least so the rumour ran; but as we never heard anything definitely, we could not feel at all certain of our next destination.

Ever since the fracas at the Bonins between Goliath and his watch, the relations between Captain Slocum and the big negro had been very strained. Even before the outbreak, as I have remarked upon one occasion, it was noticeable that little love was lost between them. Why this was so, without anything definite to guide one's reasoning, was difficult to understand, for a better seaman or a smarter whaleman than Mistah Jones did not live—of that every one was quite sure. Still, there was no gainsaying the fact that, churlish and morose as our skipper's normal temper always was, he was never so much so as in his behaviour towards his able fourth mate, who, being a man of fine, sensitive temper, chafed under his unmerited treatment so much as to lose flesh, becoming daily more silent, nervous, and depressed. Still, there had never been an open rupture, nor did it appear as if there would be, so great was the power Captain Slocum possessed over the will of everybody on board.

One night, however, as we were nearing the Kuriles again, on our way south, leaving the Sea of Okhotsk, I was sitting on the fore side of the try-works alone, meditating upon what I would do when once I got clear of this miserable business. Futile and foolish, no doubt, my speculations were, but only in this way could I forget for awhile my surroundings, since the inestimable comfort of reading was denied me. I had been sitting thus absorbed in thought for nearly an hour, when Goliath came and seated himself by my side. We had always been great friends, although, owing to the strict discipline maintained on board, it was not often we got a chance for a 'wee bit crack,' as the Scotch say. Besides, I was not in his watch, and even now he should rightly have been below. He sat for a minute or two silent; then, as if compelled to speak, he began in low, fierce whispers to tell me of his miserable state of mind. At last, after recapitulating many slights and insults he had received silently from the captain, of which I had previously known nothing, he became strangely calm. In tones quite unlike his usual voice, he said that he was not an American-born negro, but a pure African, who had been enslaved in his infancy, with his mother, somewhere in the 'Hinterland' of Guinea. While still a child, his mother escaped with him into Liberia, where he had remained till her death. She was, according to him, an Obcah woman of great power, venerated exceedingly by her own people for her prophetic abilities. Before her death, she had told him that

he would die suddenly, violently, in a struggle with a white man in a far-off country, but that the white man would die too by his hand. She had also told him that he would be a great traveller and hunter upon the sea. As he went on, his speech became almost unintelligible, being mingled with fragments of a language I had never heard before; moreover, he spoke as a man who is only half awake. A strange terror got hold of me, for I began to think he was going mad, and perhaps about to run a-mok, as the Malays do when driven frantic by the infliction of real or fancied wrongs.

But he gradually returned to his old self, to my great relief, and I ventured somewhat timidly to remind him of the esteem in which he was held by all hands; even the skipper, I ventured to say, respected him, although, from some detestable form of ill-humour, he had chosen to be so sneering and insulting towards him. He shook his head sadly, and said, 'My dear boy, youse de only man aboard dis ship—wite man, dat is—dat don't hate an' despise me becawse ob my colour, which I cain't he'p; an' de God you believe in bless you fer dat. As fer me, w'at I done tole you's truc, 'n befo' bery little w'ile you see it *come* true. 'N w'en *dat* happens w'at's gwine ter happen, I'se real glad to tink it gwine ter be better fer you—gwine ter be better fer eberybody 'bord de *Cach'lot*; but I doan keer nuffin 'bout anybody else. So long.' He held out his great black hand, and shook mine heartily, while a big tear rolled down his face and fell on the deck. And with that he left me a prey to a very whirlpool of conflicting thoughts and fears.

The night was a long and weary one—longer and drearier perhaps because of the absence of the darkness, which always made it harder to sleep. An incessant day soon becomes, to those accustomed to the relief of the night, a burden grievous to be borne; and although use can reconcile us to most things, and does make even the persistent light bearable, in times of mental distress or great physical weariness one feels irresistibly moved to cry earnestly, 'Come, gentle night.'

When I came on deck at eight bells, it was a stark calm. The watch, under Mistah Jones' direction, were busy scrubbing decks with the usual thoroughness, while the captain, bare-footed, with trouser-legs and shirt-sleeves rolled up, his hands on his hips and a portentous frown on his brow, was closely looking on. As it was my spell at the crow's-nest, I made at once for the main-rigging, and had got halfway to the top, when some unusual sounds below arrested me.

All hands were gathered in the waist, a not unusual thing at the changing of the watch. In the midst of them, as I looked down, two men came together in a fierce struggle. They were Goliath and the skipper. Captain Slocum's right hand went naturally to his hip

pocket, where he always carried a revolver; but before he could draw it, the long, black arms of his adversary wrapped around him, making him helpless as a babe. Then, with a rush that sent every one flying out of his way, Goliath hurled himself at the bulwarks, which were low, the top of the rail about thirty-three inches from the deck. The two bodies struck the rail with a heavy thud, instantly toppling overboard. That broke the spell that bound everybody, so that there was an instantaneous rush to the side. Only a hardly noticeable ripple remained on the surface of the placid sea.

But, from my lofty perch, the whole of the ghastly struggle had been visible to the least detail. The two men had struck the water locked in closest embrace, which relaxed not even when far below the surface. When the sea is perfectly smooth, objects are visible from aloft at several feet depth, though apparently diminished in size. The last thing I saw was Captain Slocum's white face, with its starting black eyes looking their last upon the huge, indefinite hull of the ship whose occupants he had ruled so long and rigidly.

The whole tragedy occupied such a brief moment of time that it was almost impossible to realize that it was actual. Reason, however, soon regained her position among the officers, who ordered the closest watch to be kept from aloft, in case of the rising of either or both of the men. A couple of boats were swung, ready to drop on the instant. But, as if to crown the tragedy with completeness, a heavy squall, which had risen unnoticed, suddenly burst upon the ship with great fury, the lashing hail and rain utterly obscuring vision even for a few yards. So unexpected was the onset of this squall that, for the only time that voyage, we lost some canvas through not being able to get it in quick enough. The topgallant halyards were let go; but while the sails were being clewed up, the fierce wind following the rain caught them from their confining gear, rending them into a thousand shreds. For an hour the squall raged—a tempest in brief—then swept away to the south-east on its furious journey, leaving peace again. Needless perhaps to say, that after such a squall it was hopeless to look for our missing ones. The sudden storm had certainly driven us several miles away from the spot where they disappeared, and, although we carefully made what haste was possible back along the line we were supposed to have come, not a vestige of hope was in any one's mind that we should ever see them again.

Nor did we. Whether that madness, which I had feared was coming upon Goliath during our previous night's conversation, suddenly overpowered him and impelled him to commit the horrible deed, what more had passed between him and the skipper to even faintly justify so awful a retaliation—these things were now

matters of purest speculation. As if they had never been, the two men were blotted out—gone before God in full-blown heat of murder and revengeful fury.

On the same evening Mr. Count mustered all hands on the quarter-deck, and addressed us thus: 'Men, Captain Slocum is dead, and, as a consequence, I command the ship. Behave yourself like men, not presuming upon kindness or imagining that I am a weak, vacillating old man with whom you can do as you like, and you will find in me a skipper who will do his duty by you as far as lies in his power, nor expect more from you than you ought to render. If, however, you *do* try any tricks, remember that I am an old hand, equal to most of the games that men get up to. I do want—if you will help me—to make this a comfortable as well as a successful ship. I hope with all my heart we shall succeed.'

In answer to this manly and affecting little speech, which confirmed my previous estimate of Captain Count's character, were he but free to follow the bent of his natural, kindly inclinations, and which I have endeavoured to translate out of his usual dialect, a hearty cheer was raised by all hands, the first ebullition of general good feeling manifested throughout the voyage. Hearts rose joyfully at the prospect of comfort to be gained by thoughtfulness on the part of the commander; nor from that time forward did any sign of weariness of the ship or voyage show itself among us, either on deck or below.

The news soon spread among us that, in consequence of the various losses of boats and gear, the captain deemed it necessary to make for Honolulu, where fresh supplies could readily be obtained. We had heard many glowing accounts from visitors, when 'gamming,' of the delights of this well-known port of call for whalers, and under our new commander we had little doubt that we should be allowed considerable liberty during our stay. So we were quite impatient to get along, fretting considerably at the persistent logs which prevented our making much progress while in the vicinity of the Kuriles. But we saw no more bowheads, for which none of us forward were at all sorry. We had got very tired of the stink of their blubber, and the never-ending worry connected with the preservation of the baleen; besides, we had not yet accumulated any fund of enthusiasm about getting a full ship, except as a reason for shortening the voyage, and we quite understood that what black oil we had got would be landed at Hawaii, so that our visit to the Okhotsk Sea, with its resultant store of oil, had not really brought our return home any nearer, as we at first hoped it would.

A great surprise was in store for me. I knew that Captain Count was favourably inclined towards me, for he had himself told me

## VISIT TO HONOLULU

so, but nothing was further from my thoughts than promotion. However, one Sunday afternoon, when we were all peacefully enjoying the unusual rest (we had no Sundays in Captain Slocum's time), the captain sent for me. He informed me that, after mature consideration, he had chosen me to fill the vacancy made by the death of Mistah Jones. Mr. Cruce was now mate; the waspish little third had become second; Louis Silva, the captain's favourite harpooner, was third; and I was to be fourth. Not feeling at all sure of how the other harpooners would take my stepping over their heads, I respectfully demurred to the compliment offered me, stating my reasons. But the captain said he had fully made up his mind, after consultation with the other officers, and that I need have no apprehension on the score of the harpooners' jealousy; that they had been spoken to on the subject, and they were all agreed that the captain's choice was the best, especially as none of them knew anything of navigation, or could write their own names.

In consequence of there being none of the crew fit to take a harpooner's place, I was now really harpooner of the captain's boat, which he would continue to work, when necessary, until we were able to ship a harpooner, which he hoped to do at Hawaii. •

The news of my promotion was received in grim silence by the Portuguese forward, but the white men all seemed pleased. This was highly gratifying to me, for I had tried my best to be helpful to all, as far as my limited abilities would let me; nor do I think I had an enemy in the ship. Behold me, then, a full-blown 'mister,' with a definite substantial increase in my prospects of pay of nearly one-third, in addition to many other advantages, which, under the new captain, promised exceedingly well.

More than half the voyage lay behind us, looking like the fast-settling bank of storm-clouds hovering above the tempest-tossed sea so lately passed, while ahead the bright horizon was full of promise of fine weather for the remainder of the journey.

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### *Visit to Honolulu*

RIGHT glad were we all when, after much fumbling and box-hauling about, we once more felt the long, familiar roll of the Pacific swell, and saw the dim fastnesses of the smoky islands fading into the lowering gloom astern. Most deep-water sailors are familiar, by report if not by actual contact, with the beauties of the Pacific islands, and I had often longed to visit them to see for myself whether the half that had been told me was true. Of course,

to a great number of seafaring men, the loveliness of those regions counts for nothing, their desirability being founded upon the frequent opportunities of unlimited indulgence in debauchery. To such men, a 'missionary' island is a howling wilderness, and the missionaries themselves the subjects of the vilest abuse as well as the most boundless lying.

No one who has travelled with his eyes open would assert that all missionaries were wise, prudent, or even godly men; while it is a great deal to be regretted that so much is made of hardships which in a large proportion of cases do not exist, the men who are supposed to be enduring them being immensely better off and more comfortable than they would ever have been at home. Undoubtedly the pioneers of missionary enterprise had, almost without exception, to face dangers and miseries past telling, but that is the portion of pioneers in general. In these days, however, the missionary's lot in Polynesia is not often a hard one, and in many cases it is infinitely to be preferred to a life among the very poor of our great cities.

But when all has been said that can be said against the missionaries, the solid bastion of fact remains that, in consequence of their labours, the whole vile character of the populations of the Pacific has been changed, and where wickedness runs riot to-day, it is due largely to the hindrances placed in the way of the noble efforts of the missionaries by the unmitigated scoundrels who vilify them. The task of spreading Christianity would not, after all, be so difficult were it not for the efforts of those apostles of the devil to keep the islands as they would like them to be—places where lust runs riot day and night, murder may be done with impunity, slavery flourishes, and all evil may be indulged in free from law, order, or restraint.

It speaks volumes for the inherent might of the Gospel that, in spite of the object-lessons continually provided for the natives by white men of the negation of all good, that it has stricken its roots so deeply into the soil of the Pacific islands. Just as the best proof of the reality of the Gospel here in England is that it survives the incessant assaults upon it from within by its professors, by those who are paid, and highly paid, to propagate it, by the side of whose deadly doings the efforts of so-called infidels are but as the battery of a summer breeze; so in Polynesia, were not the principles of Christianity vital with an immortal and divine life, missionary efforts might long ago have ceased in utter despair at the fruitlessness of the field.

We were enjoying a most uneventful passage, free from any serious changes either of wind or weather which quiet time was utilized to the utmost in making many much-needed additions to



running-gear, repairing rigging, etc. Any work involving the use of new material had been put off from time to time during the previous part of the voyage till the ship aloft was really in a dangerous condition. This was due entirely to the peculiar parsimony of our late skipper, who could scarcely bring himself to broach a coil of rope, except for whaling purposes. The same false economy had prevailed with regard to paint and varnish, so that the vessel, while spotlessly clean, presented a worn-out weather-beaten appearance. Now, while the condition of life on board was totally different to what it had been, as regards comfort and peace, discipline and order were maintained at the same high level as always, though by a different method—in fact, I believe that a great deal more work was actually done, certainly much more that was useful and productive; for Captain Count hated, as much as any foremast hand among us, the constant, remorseless grind of iron-work polishing, paint-work scrubbing, and holystoning, all of which, though necessary in a certain degree, when kept up continually for the sole purpose of making work—a sort of elaborated tread-mill, in fact—becomes the refinement of cruelty to underfed, unpaid, and hopeless men.

So, while the *Cachalot* could have fearlessly challenged comparison with any ship afloat for cleanliness and neatness of appearance, the hands no longer felt that they were continually being 'worked up' or 'hazed' for the sole, diabolical satisfaction of keeping them 'at it.' Of course, the incidence of the work was divided, since so many of the crew were quite unable to do any sailorizing, as we term work in sails and rigging. Upon them, then, fell all the common labour, which can be done by any unskilled man or woman afloat or ashore.

Of this work a sailor's duties are largely made up, but when good people ashore wonder 'whatever sailors do with their time,' it would be useful for them to remember that a ship is a huge and complicated machine, needing constant repairs, which can only be efficiently performed by skilled workmen. An 'A.B.' or able seaman's duties are legally supposed to be defined by the three expressions, 'hand, reef, and steer.' If he can do those three things, which mean furling or making fast sails, reefing them, and steering the ship, his wages cannot be reduced for incompetency. Yet these things are the A B C of seamanship only. A good *seaman* is able to make all the various knots, splices, and other arrangements in hempen or wire rope, without which a ship cannot be rigged; he can make a sail, send up or down yards and masts, and do many other things, the sum total of which need several years of steady application to learn, although a good seaman is ever learning.

Such seamen are fast becoming extinct. They are almost totally

unnecessary in steamships, except when the engines break down in a gale of wind, and the crowd of navvies forming the crew stand looking at one another when called upon to set sail or do any other job aloft! *Then* the want of seamen is rather severely felt. But even in sailing ships—the great, overgrown tanks of two thousand tons and upwards—mechanical genius has utilized iron to such an extent in their rigging that sailor-work has become very largely a matter of blacksmithing. I make no complaint of this, not believing that the 'old was better;' but, since the strongest fabric of man's invention comes to grief sometimes in conflict with the irresistible sea, some provision should be made for having a sufficiency of seamen who could exercise their skill in refitting a dismasted ship, or temporarily replacing broken blacksmith work by old-fashioned rope and wood.

But, as the sailing ship is doomed inevitably to disappear before steam, perhaps it does not matter much. The economic march of the world's progress will never be stayed by sentimental considerations, nor will all the romance and poetry in the world save the seaman from extinction, if his place can be more profitably filled by the engineer. From all appearances, it soon will be, for even now marine superintendents of big lines are sometimes engineers, and in their hands lie the duty of engaging the officers. It would really seem as if the ship of the near future would be governed by the chief engineer, under whose direction a pilot or sailing-master would do the necessary navigation, without power to interfere in any matter of the ship's economy. Changes as great have taken place in other professions; seafaring cannot hope to be the sole exception.

So, edging comfortably along, we gradually neared the Sandwich Islands without having seen a single spout worth watching since the tragedy. At last the lofty summits of the island mountains hove in sight, and presently we came to an anchor in that paradise of whalers, missionaries, and amateur statesmen—Honolulu. As it is as well known to most reading people as our own ports—better, perhaps—I shall not attempt to describe it, or pit myself against the able writers who have made it so familiar. Yet to me it was a new world. All things were so strange, so delightful, especially the lovable, lazy, fascinating Kanakas, who could be so limply happy over a dish of poë, or a green cocoa-nut, or even a lounge in the sun, that it seemed an outrage to expect them to work. In their sports they could be energetic enough. I do not know of any more delightful sight than to watch them bathing in the tremendous surf, simply intoxicated with the joy of living, as unconscious of danger as if swinging in a hammock while riding triumphantly upon the foaming summit of an incoming breaker twenty feet high,

## VISIT TO HONOLULU

or plunging with a cataract over the dizzy edge of its cliff, swallowed up in the hissing vortex below, only to reappear with a scream of riotous laughter in the quiet eddy beyond.

As far as I could judge, they were the happiest of people, literally taking no thought for the morrow, and content with the barest necessities of life, so long as they were free and the sun shone brightly. We had many opportunities of cultivating their acquaintance, for the captain allowed us much liberty, quite one-half of the crew and officers being ashore most of the time. Of course, the majority spent all their spare time in the purlieus of the town, which, like all such places anywhere, were foul and filthy enough; but that was their own faults. I have often wondered much to see men, who on board ship were the pink of cleanliness and neatness, fastidious to a fault in all they did, come ashore and huddle in the most horrible of kennels, among the very dregs and greaves of the 'longshore district. It certainly wants a great deal of explanation; but I suppose the most potent reason is, that sailors, as a class, never learn to enjoy themselves rationally. They are also morbidly suspicious of being taken in hand by anybody who would show them anything worth seeing, preferring to be led by the human sharks that infest all seaports into ways of strange nastiness, and so expensive withal that one night of such wallowing often costs them more than a month's sane recreation and good food would. All honour to the devoted men and women who labour in our seaports for the moral and material benefit of the sailor, passing their lives amidst sights and sounds shocking and sickening to the last degree, reviled, unthanked, unpaid. Few are the missionaries abroad whose lot is so hard as theirs.

We spent ten happy days in Honolulu, marred only by one or two drunken rows among the chaps forward, which, however, resulted in their getting a severe dressing down in the forecabin, where good order was now kept. There had been no need for interference on the part of the officers, which I was glad to see, remembering what would have happened under such circumstances not long ago. Being short-handed, the captain engaged a number of friendly islanders for a limited period, on the understanding that they were to be discharged at their native place, Vau Vau. There were ten of them, fine, stalwart fellows, able-bodied, and willing as possible. They were cleanly in their habits, and devout members of the Wesleyan body, so that their behaviour was quite a reproach to some of our half-civilized crew. Berths were found for them in the forecabin, and they took their places among us quite naturally, being fairly well used to a whale-ship.

*On the 'Line' Grounds*

WE weighed at last, one morning, with a beautiful breeze, and, bidding a long farewell to the lovely isles and their amiable inhabitants, stood at sea, bound for the 'line' or equatorial grounds on our legitimate business of sperm whaling. It was now a long while since we had been in contact with a cachalot, the last one having been killed by us on the Coast of Japan some six months before. But we all looked forward to the coming campaign with considerable joy, for we were now a happy family, interested in the work, and, best of all, even if the time was still distant, we were, in a sense, homeward bound. At any rate, we all chose so to think, from the circumstance that we were now working to the southward, towards Cape Horn, the rounding of which dreaded point would mark the final stage of our globe-encircling voyage.

We had, during our stay at Honolulu, obtained a couple of grand boats in addition to our stock, and were now in a position to man and lower five at once, if occasion should arise, still leaving sufficient crew on board to work the vessel. The captain had also engaged an elderly seaman of his acquaintance—out of pure philanthropy, as we all thought, since he was in a state of semi-starvation ashore—to act as a kind of sailing-master, so as to relieve the captain of ship duty at whaling time, allowing him still to head his boat. This was not altogether welcome news to me, for, much as I liked the old man and admired his pluck, I could not help dreading his utter recklessness when on a whale, which had so often led to a smash-up that might have been easily avoided. Moreover, I reasoned that if he had been foolhardy before, he was likely to be much more so now, having no superior to look black or use language when a disaster occurred. For now I was his harpooner, bound to take as many risks as he chose to incur, and anxious also to earn a reputation among the more seasoned whalemen for smartness sufficient to justify my promotion.

The Kanakas shipped at Honolulu were distributed among the boats, two to each, being already trained whalers, and a fine lot of fellows they were. My two—Samuela and Polly—were not very big men, but sturdy, nimble as cats, as much at home in the water as on deck, and simply bubbling over with fun and good-humour. From my earliest sea-going, I have always had a strong liking for natives of tropical countries, finding them affectionate and amenable to kindness. Why, I think, white men do not get on with darkies well, as a rule, is, that they seldom make an appeal

to the *man* in them. It is very degrading to find one's self looked down upon as a sort of animal without reason or feelings; and if you degrade a man, you deprive him of any incentive to make himself useful, except the brute one you may feel bound to apply yourself. My experience has been limited to Africans (of sorts), Kanakas, natives of Hindostan, Malagasy, and Chinese; but with all these I have found a little *camaraderie* answer excellently. True they are lazy; but what inducement have they to work? The complicated needs of our civilized existence compel *us* to work, or be run over by the unresting machine; but I take leave to doubt whether any of us with a primitive environment would not be as lazy as any Kanaka that ever dozed under a banana tree through daylight hours. Why, then, make an exalted virtue of the necessity which drives us, and objurgate the poor black man because he prefers present ease to a doubtful prospective retirement on a competency? Australian blackfellows and Malays are said to be impervious to kind treatment by a great number of witnesses, the former appearing incapable of gratitude, and the latter unable to resist the frequent temptation to kill somebody. Not knowing anything personally of either of these races, I can say nothing for or against them.

All the coloured individuals that I have had to do with have amply repaid any little kindness shown them with fidelity and affection, but especially has this been the case with Kanakas. The soft and melodious language spoken by them is easy to acquire, and is so pleasant to speak that it is well worth learning, to say nothing of the convenience to yourself, although the Kanaka speedily picks up the mutilated jargon which does duty for English on board ship.

What I specially longed for now was a harpooner, or even two, so that I might have my boat to myself, the captain taking his own boat with a settled harpooner. Samuela, the biggest of my two Kanakas, very earnestly informed me that he was no end of a 'number one' whale slaughterer; but I judged it best to see how things went before asking to have him promoted. My chance, and his, came very promptly; so nicely arranged, too, that I could not have wished for anything better. The skipper had got a fine, healthy boil on one knee-cap, and another on his wrist, so that he was, as you may say, *hors de combat*. While he was impatiently waiting to get about once more, sperm whales were raised. Although nearly frantic with annoyance, he was compelled to leave the direction of things to Mr. Cruce, who was quite puffed up with the importance of his opportunity.

Such a nice little school of cow-whales, a lovely breeze, clear sky, warm weather—I felt as gay as a lark at the prospect. As we

were reaching to windward, with all boats ready for lowering, the skipper called me aft and said, 'Naow, Mr. Bullen, I cain't lower, because of this condemned leg 'n arm of mine; but how'r yew goin' ter manage 'thout a harpooncer?' I suggested that if he would allow me to try Samuela, who was suffering for a chance to distinguish himself, we would 'come out on top.' 'All right,' he said; 'but let the other boats get fast first, 'n doan be in too much of a hurry to tie yerself up till ye see what's doin'. If everythin's goin' bizness-fashion', 'n yew git a chance, sail right in; yew got ter begin some time. But ef thet Kanaka looks skeered goin' on, take the iron frum him ter onct.' I promised, and the interview ended.

When I told Samuela of his chance, he was beside himself with joy. As to his being scared, the idea was manifestly absurd. He was as pleased with the prospect as it was possible for a man to be, and hardly able to contain himself for impatience to be off. I almost envied him his exuberant delight, for a sense of responsibility began to weigh upon me with somewhat depressing effect.

We gained a good weather-gage, rounded to, and lowered four boats. Getting away in good style, we had barely got the sails up, when something galled the school. We saw or heard nothing to account for it, but undoubtedly the 'fish' were off at top speed dead to windward, so that our sails were of no use. We had them in with as little delay as possible, and lay to our oars for all we were worth, being fresh and strong, as well as anxious to get amongst them. But I fancy all our efforts would have availed us little had it not been for the experience of Mr. Cruce, whose eager eye detected the fact that the fish were running on a great curve, and shaped our course to cut them off along a chord of the arc.

Two and a half hours of energetic work was required of us before we got on terms with the fleeing monsters; but at last, to our great joy, they broke water from sounding right among us. It was a considerable surprise, but we were all ready, and before they had spouted twice, three boats were fast, only myself keeping out, in accordance with my instructions. Samuela was almost distraught with rage and grief at the condition of things. I quite pitied him, although I was anything but pleased myself. However, when I ranged up alongside the mate's fish, to render what assistance was needed, he shouted to me, 'We's all right; go'n git fas', if yew kin.' That was enough, and away we flew after a retreating spout to leeward. Before we got there, though, there was an upheaval in the water just ahead, and up came a back like a keelless ship bottom up. Out came the head belonging to it, and a spout like an explosion burst forth, denoting the presence of an enormous bull-cachalot. Close by his side was a cow of about one-third his size.

the favoured sultana of his harem, I suppose. Prudence whispered, 'Go for the cow;' Ambition hissed, 'All or none—the bull, the bull.' Fortunately emergencies of this kind leave one but a second or two to decide, as a rule; in this case, as it happened, I was spared even that mental conflict, for as we ran up between the two vast creatures, Samuela, never even looking at the cow, hurled his harpoon, with all the energy that he had been bursting with so long, at the mighty bull. I watched its flight—saw it enter the black mass and disappear to the shaft, and almost immediately came the second iron, within a foot of the first, burying itself in the same solid fashion.

'Starn—starn all!' I shouted; and we backed slowly away considerably hampered by the persistent attentions of the cow, who hung round us closely. The temptation to lance her was certainly great, but I remembered the fate that had overtaken the skipper on the first occasion we struck whales, and did not meddle with her ladyship. Our prey was not apparently disposed to kick up much fuss at first, so, anxious to settle matters, I changed ends with Samuela, and pulled in on the whale. A good, steady lance-thrust—the first I had ever delivered—was obtained, sending a thrill of triumph through my whole body. The recipient, thoroughly roused by this, started off at a great lick, accompanied, somewhat to my surprise, by the cow. Thenceforward for another hour, in spite of all our efforts, we could not get within striking distance, mainly because of the close attention of the cow, which stuck to her lord like a calf to its mother. I was getting so impatient of this hindrance, that it was all I could do to restrain myself from lancing the cow, though I felt convinced that, if I did, I should spoil a good job. Suddenly I caught sight of the ship right ahead. We were still flying along, so that in a short time we were comparatively close to her. My heart beat high, and I burned to distinguish myself under the friendly and appreciative eye of the skipper.

None of the other boats were in sight, from our level at least, so that I had a reasonable hope of being able to finish my game, with all the glory thereunto attaching, unshared by any other of my fellow-officers. As we ran quite closely past the ship, calling on the crew to haul up for all they were worth, we managed actually to squeeze past the cow, and I got in a really deadly blow. The point of the lance entered just between the fin and the eye, but higher up, missing the broad plate of the shoulder-blade, and sinking its whole four feet over the hitches right down into the animal's vitals. Then, for the first time, he threw up his flukes, thrashing them from side to side almost round to his head, and raising such a turmoil that we were half full of water in a moment. But Samuela was so quick at the steer-oar, so lithe and forceful, and withal

appeared so to anticipate every move of mine, that there seemed hardly any danger.

After a few moments of this tremendous exertion, our victim settled down, leaving the water deeply stained with his gushing blood. With him disappeared his constant companion, the faithful cow, who had never left his side a minute since we first got fast. Down, down they went, until my line began to look very low, and I was compelled to make signals to the ship for more. We had hardly elevated the oars, when down dropped the last boat with four men in her, arriving by my side in a few minutes with two fresh tubs of tow-line. We took them on board, and the boat returned again. By the time the slack came we had about four hundred and fifty fathoms out—a goodly heap to pile up loose in our stern-sheets. I felt sure, however, that we should have but little more trouble with our fish; in fact, I was half afraid that he would die before getting to the surface, in which case he might sink and be lost. We hauled steadily away, the line not coming in very easily, until I judged there was only about another hundred fathoms out. Our amazement may be imagined, when suddenly we were compelled to slack away again, the sudden weight on the line suggesting that the fish was again sounding. If ever a young hand was perplexed, it was I. Never before had I heard of such unseemly behaviour, nor was my anxiety lessened when I saw, a short distance away, the huge body of my prize at the surface spouting blood. At the same time, I was paying out line at a good rate, as if I had a fast fish on which was sounding briskly.

The skipper had been watching me very closely from his seat on the taffrail, and had kept the ship within easy distance. Now, suspecting something out of the common, he sent the boat again to my assistance, in charge of the cooper. When that worthy arrived, he said, 'Th' ol' man reckens yew've got snarled erp 'ith thet ar' loose keow, 'n y'r irons hev draw'd from th' other. I'm gwine ter wait on him, 'n get him 'longside 'soon's he's out'er his flurry. Ole man sez yew'd best wait on what's fast t' yer an' nev' mine th' other.' Away he went, reaching my prize just as the last feeble spout exhaled, leaving the dregs of that great flood of life trickling lazily down from the widely expanded spiracle. To drive a harpoon into the carcass, and run the line on board, was the simplest of jobs, for, as the captain had foreseen, my irons were drawn clean. I had no leisure to take any notice of them now, though, for whatever was on my line was coming up hand-over-fist.

With a bound it reached the surface—the identical cow so long attendant upon the dead whale. Having been so long below for such a small whale, she was quite exhausted, and before she had recovered we had got alongside of her and lanced her, so thoroughly



that she died without a struggle. The ship was so close that we had her alongside in a wonderfully short time, and with scarcely any trouble.

When I reached the deck, the skipper called me, and said several things that made me feel about six inches taller. He was, as may be thought, exceedingly pleased, saying that only once in his long career had he seen a similar case; for I forgot to mention that the line was entangled around the cow's down-hanging jaw, as if she had actually tried to bite in two the rope that held her consort, and only succeeded in sharing his fate. I would not like to say that whales do not try to thus sever a line, but, their teeth being several inches apart, conical, and fitting into sockets in the upper jaw instead of meeting the opposed surfaces of other teeth, the accomplishment of such a feat must, I think, be impossible.

The ship being now as good as anchored by the vast mass of flesh hanging to her, there was a tremendous task awaiting us to get the other fish alongside. Of course they were all to windward; they nearly always are, unless the ship is persistently 'turned to windward' while the fishing is going on. Whalers believe that they always work up into the wind while fast, and, when dead, it is certain that they drift at a pretty good rate right in the 'wind's eye.' This is accounted for by the play of the body, which naturally lies head to wind; and the wash of the flukes, which, acting somewhat like the 'sculling' of an oar at the stern of a boat, propel the carcass in the direction it is pointing. Consequently we had a cruel amount of towing to do before we got the three cows alongside. Many a time we blessed ourselves that they were no bigger, for of all the clumsy things to tow with boats, a sperm whale is about the worst. Owing to the great square mass of the head, they can hardly be towed head-on at all, the practice being to cut off the tips of the flukes, and tow them tail first. But even then it is slavery. To dip your oar about three times in the same hole from whence you withdrew it, to tug at it with all your might, apparently making as much progress as though you were fast to a dock-wall, and to continue this fun for four or five hours at a stretch, is to wonder indeed whether you have not mistaken your vocation.

However, 'it's dogged as does it,' so by dint of sheer sticking to the oar, we eventually succeeded in getting all our prizes alongside before eight bells that evening, securing them around us by hawsers to the cows, but giving the big bull the post of honour alongside on the best fluke-chain.

We were a busy company for a fortnight thence, until the last of the oil was run below—two hundred and fifty barrels, or twenty-five tuns, of the valuable fluid having rewarded our exertions. During these operations we had drifted night and day, apparently

without anybody taking the slightest account of the direction we were taking; when, therefore, in the day after clearing up the last traces of our fishing, the cry of 'Land ho!' came ringing down from the crow's-nest, no one was surprised, although the part of the Pacific in which we were cruising has but few patches of *terra firma* scattered about over its immense area when compared with the crowded archipelagoes lying farther south and east.

We could not see the reported land from the deck for two hours after it was first seen from aloft, although the odd spectacle of a scattered group of cocoa-nut trees apparently growing out of the sea was for some time presented to us before the island itself came into view. It was Christmas Island, where the indefatigable Captain Cook landed on December 24, 1777, for the purpose of making accurate observations of an eclipse of the sun. He it was who gave to this lonely atoll the name it has ever since borne, with characteristic modesty giving his own great name to a tiny patch of coral which almost blocks the entrance to the central lagoon. Here we lay 'off and on' for a couple of days, while foraging parties went ashore, returning at intervals with abundance of turtle and sea-fowls' eggs. But any detailed account of their proceedings must be ruthlessly curtailed, owing to the scanty limits of space remaining.

## 19

*Edging Southward*

THE line whaling grounds embrace an exceedingly extensive area, over the whole of which sperm whales may be found, generally of medium size. No means of estimating the probable plenty or scarcity of them in any given part of the grounds exist, so that falling in with them is purely a matter of coincidence. To me it seems a conclusive proof of the enormous numbers of sperm whales frequenting certain large breadths of ocean, that they should be so often fallen in with, remembering what a little spot is represented by a day's cruise, and that the signs which denote almost infallibly the vicinity of right whales are entirely absent in the case of the cachalot. In the narrow waters of the Greenland seas, with quite a small number of vessels seeking, it is hardly possible for a whale of any size to escape being seen; but in the open ocean a goodly fleet may cruise over a space of a hundred thousand square miles without meeting any of the whales that may yet be there in large numbers. So that when one hears talk of the extinction of the cachalot, it is well to bear in mind that such a thing would take a long series of years to effect, even were the whaling business waxing instead of waning. While, however, South Sea whaling is con-

ducted on such old-world methods as still obtain; while steam, with all the power it gives of rapidly dealing with a catch, is not made use of, the art and mystery of the whale-fisher must continually decrease. No such valuable lubricant has ever been found as sperm oil; but the cost of its production, added to the precarious nature of the supply, so handicaps it in the competition with substitutes that it has been practically eliminated from the English markets, except in such greatly adulterated forms as to render it a lie to speak of the mixture as sperm oil at all.

Except to a few whose minds to them are kingdoms, and others who can hardly be said to have any minds at all, the long monotony of unsuccessful seeking for whales is very wearying. The ceaseless motion of the vessel rocking at the centre of a circular space of blue, with a perfectly symmetrical dome of azure enclosing her above, unflecked by a single cloud, becomes at last almost unbearable from its changeless sameness of environment. Were it not for the trivial round and common task of everyday ship duty, some of the crew must become idiotic, or, in sheer rage at the want of interest in their lives, commit mutiny.

Such a weary time was ours for full four weeks after sighting Christmas Island. The fine haul we had obtained just previous to that day seemed to have exhausted our luck for the time being, for never a spout did we see. And it was with no ordinary delight that we hailed the advent of an immense school of black-fish, the first we had run across for a long time. Determined to have a big catch, if possible, we lowered all five boats, as it was a beautifully calm day, and the ship might almost safely have been left to look after herself. After what we had recently been accustomed to, the game seemed trifling to get up much excitement over; but still, for a good day's sport, commend me to a few lively black-fish.

In less than ten minutes we were in the thick of the crowd, with harpoons flying right and left. Such a scene of wild confusion and uproarious merriment ensued as I never saw before in my life. The skipper, true to his traditions, got fast to four, all running different ways at once, and making the calm sea boil again with their frantic gyrations. Each of the other boats got hold of three; but, the mate getting too near me, our fish got so inextricably tangled up that it was hopeless to try and distinguish between each other's prizes. However, when we got the lances to work among them, the hubbub calmed down greatly, and the big bodies one by one ceased their gambols, floating supine.

So far, all had been gay; but the unlucky second mate must needs go and do a thing that spoiled a day's fun entirely. The line runs through a deep groove in the boat's stem, over a brass roller so fitted that when the line is running out it remains fixed, but

When hauling in it revolves freely, assisting the work a great deal. The second mate had three fish fast, like the rest of us—the first one on the end of the main line, the other two on 'short warps, or pieces of whale-line some eight or ten fathoms long fastened to harpoons, with the other ends running on the main line by means of bowlines round it. By some mistake or other he had allowed the two lines to be hauled together through the groove in his boat's stem, and before the error was noticed two fish spurted off in opposite directions, ripping the boat in two halves lengthways like a Dutchman splitting a salt herring.

Away went the fish with the whole of the line, nobody being able to get at it to cut; and, but for the presence of mind shown by the crew in striking out and away from the tangle, a most ghastly misfortune, involving the loss of several lives, must have occurred. As it was, the loss was considerable, almost outweighing the gain on the day's fishing, besides the inconvenience of having a boat useless on whaling grounds.

The accident was the fruit of gross carelessness, and should never have occurred; but then, strange to say, disasters to whale-boats are nearly always due to want of care, the percentage of unavoidable casualties being very small as compared with those like the one just related. When the highly dangerous nature of the work is remembered, this statement may seem somewhat overdrawn, but it has been so frequently corroborated by others, whose experience far outweighs my own, that I do not hesitate to make it with the fullest confidence in its truth.

Happily no lives were lost on this occasion, for it would have indeed been grievous to have seen our shipmates sacrificed to the *manes* of a mere black-fish, after successfully encountering so many mighty whales. The episode gave us a great deal of unnecessary work getting the two halves of the boat saved, in addition to securing our fish, so that by the time we got the twelve remaining carcasses hove on deck we were all quite fagged out. But under the new *régime* we were sure of a good rest, so that did not trouble us; it rather made the lounge on deck in the balmy evening air and the well-filled pipe of peace doubly sweet.

Our next day's work completed the skinning of the haul we had made, the last of the carcasses going overboard with a thunderous splash at four in the afternoon. The assemblage of sharks round the ship on this occasion was incredible for its number and the great size of the creatures. Certainly no mariners see so many or such huge sharks as whalers; but, in spite of all our previous experience, this day touched high-water mark. Many of these fish were of a size undreamed of by the ordinary seafarer, some of them full thirty feet in length, more like whales than sharks. Most of

them were striped diagonally with bands of yellow, contrasting curiously with the dingy grey of their normal colour. From this marking is derived their popular name—‘tiger sharks.’ not, as might be supposed, from their ferocity. That attribute cannot properly be applied to the *squalus* at all, which is one of the most timid fish afloat, and whose ill name, as far as regards bloodthirstiness, is quite undeserved. Rapacious the shark certainly is; but what sea-fish is not? He is not at all particular as to his diet; but what sea-fish is? With such a great bulk of body, such enormous vitality and vigour to support, he must needs be ever eating; and since he is not constructed on swift enough lines to enable him to prey upon living fish, like most of his neighbours, he is perforce compelled to play the humble but useful part of a sea-scavenger.

He eats man, as he eats anything else eatable, because in the water man is easily caught, and not from natural depravity or an acquired taste begetting a decided preference for human flesh. All natives of shores infested by sharks despise him and his alleged man-eating propensities, knowing that a very feeble splashing will suffice to frighten him away even if ever so hungry. Demerara River literally swarms with sharks, yet I have often seen a negro, clad only in a beaming smile, slip into its muddy waters, and, after a few sharp blows with his open hand upon the surface, calmly swim down to the bottom, clear a ship’s anchor, or do whatever job was required, coming up again as leisurely as if in a swimming-bath. A similar disregard of the dangerous attributes awarded by popular consent to the shark may be witnessed everywhere among the people who know him best. The cruelties perpetrated upon sharks by seamen generally are the result of ignorance and superstition combined, the most infernal forces known to humanity. What would be said at home of such an act, if it could be witnessed among us, as the disembowelling of a tiger, say, and then letting him run in that horrible condition somewhere remote from the possibility of retaliating upon his torturers? Yet that is hardly comparable with a similar atrocity performed upon a shark, because he will live hours to the tiger’s minutes in such a condition.

I once caught a shark nine feet long, which we hauled on board and killed by cutting off its head and tail. It died very speedily—for a shark—all muscular motion ceasing in less than fifteen minutes. It was my intention to prepare that useless and unornamental article so dear to sailors—a walking-stick made of shark’s backbone. But when I came to cut out the vertebra, I noticed a large scar, extending from one side to the other, right across the centre of the back. Beneath it the backbone was thickened to treble its normal size, and perfectly rigid; in fact, it had become a mass

of solid bone. At some time or other this shark had been harpooned so severely that, in wrenching himself free, he must have nearly torn his body in two halves, severing the spinal column completely. Yet such a wound as that had been healed by natural process, the bone knit together again with many times the strength it had before—minus, of course, its flexibility—and I can testify from the experience of securing him that he could not possibly have been more vigorous than he was.

A favourite practice used to be—I trust it is so no longer—to catch a shark, and, after driving a sharpened stake down through his upper jaw and out underneath the lower one, so that its upper portion pointed diagonally forward, to let him go again. The consequence of this cruelty would be that the fish was unable to open his mouth, or go in any direction without immediately coming to the surface. How long he might linger in such torture, one can only guess; but unless his fellows, finding him thus helpless, came along and kindly devoured him, no doubt he would exist in extreme agony for a very long time.

Two more small cows were all that rewarded our search during the next fortnight, and we began to feel serious doubts as to the success of our season upon the line grounds, after all. Still, on the whole, our voyage up to the present had not been what might fairly be called unsuccessful for we were not yet two years away from New Bedford, while we had considerably more than two thousand barrels of oil on board—more, in fact, than two-thirds of a full cargo. But if a whale were caught every other day for six months, and then a month elapsed without any being seen, grumbling would be loud and frequent, all the previous success being forgotten in the present stagnation. Perhaps it is not so different in other professions nearer home?

Christmas Day drew near, beloved of Englishmen all the world over, though thought little of by Americans. The two previous ones spent on board the *Cachalot* have been passed over without mention, absolutely no notice being taken of the season by any one on board, to all appearance. In English ships some attempt is always made to give the day somewhat of a festive character, and to maintain the national tradition of good-cheer and goodwill in whatever part of the world you may happen to be. For some reason or other, perhaps because of the great increase in comfort we had all experienced lately, I felt the approach of the great Christian anniversary very strongly; although, had I been in London, I should probably have spent it in lonely gloom, having no relatives or friends whom I might visit. But what of that? Christmas is Christmas; and, if we have no home, we think of the place where our home should be; and whether, as cynics sneer, Dickens in-

vented the English Christmas or not, its observance has taken deep root among us. May its shadow never be less!

On Christmas morning I mounted to the crow's-nest at day-break, and stood looking with never-failing awe at the daily marvel of the sunrise. Often and often have I felt choking for words to express the tumult of thoughts aroused by this sublime spectacle. Hanging there in cloudland, the tiny microcosm at one's feet forgotten, the grandeur of the celestial outlook is overwhelming. Many and many a time I have bowed my head and wept in pure reverence at the majesty manifested around me while the glory of the dawn increased and brightened, till with one exultant bound the sun appeared.

For some time I stood gazing straight ahead of me with eyes that saw not, filled with wonder and admiration. I must have been looking directly at the same spot for quite a quarter of an hour, when suddenly, as if I had but just opened my eyes, I saw the well-known bushy spout of a sperm whale. I raised the usual yell, which rang through the stillness discordantly, startling all hands out of their lethargy like bees out of a hive. After the usual preliminaries, we were all afloat with sails set, gliding slowly over the sleeping sea towards the unconscious objects of our attention. The captain did not lower this time, as there only appeared to be three fish, none of them seeming large. Though at any distance it is extremely difficult to assess the size of whales, the spout being very misleading. Sometimes a full-sized whale will show a small spout, while a twenty-barrel cow will exhale a volume of vapour extensive enough for two or three at once.

Now although, according to etiquette, I kept my position in the rear of my superior officers, I had fully determined in my own mind, being puffed up with previous success, to play second fiddle to no one, if I could help it, this time. Samuela was decidedly of the same opinion; indeed, I believe he would have been delighted to tackle a whole school single-handed, while my crew were all willing and eager for the fight. We had a long, tedious journey before we came up with them, the wind being so light that even with the occasional assistance of the paddles our progress was wretchedly slow. When at last we did get into their water, and the mate's harpooner stood up to dart, his foot slipped, and down he came with a clatter enough to scare a cachalot twenty miles away. It galled our friends effectually, sending them flying in different directions at the top of their speed. But being some distance astern of the other boats, one of the fish, in his headlong retreat, rose for a final blow some six or seven fathoms away, passing us in the opposite direction. His appearance was only momentary, yet in that moment Samuela hurled his harpoon into the air, where it

described a beautiful parabola, coming down upon the disappearing monster's back just as the sea was closing over it. Oh, it was a splendid dart, worthy of the finest harpooner that ever lived! There was no time for congratulations, however, for we spun round as on a pivot, and away we went in the wake of that fellow at a great rate. I cast one look astern to see whether the others had struck, but could see nothing of them; we seemed to have sprung out of their ken in an instant.

The speed of our friend was marvellous, but I comforted myself with the knowledge that these animals usually run in circles—sometimes, it is true, of enormous diameter, but seldom getting far away from their starting-point. But as the time went on, and we seemed to fly over the waves at undiminished speed, I began to think this whale might be the exception necessary to prove the rule, so I got out the compass and watched his course. Due east, not a degree to north or south of it, straight as a bee to its hive. The ship was now far out of sight astern, but I knew that keen eyes had been watching our movements from the masthead, and that every effort possible would be made to keep the run of us. The speed of our whale was not only great, but unflagging. He was more like a machine than an animal capable of tiring; and though we did our level best, at the faintest symptom of slackening, to get up closer and lance him, it was for some time impossible. After, at a rough estimate, running in a direct easterly course for over two hours, he suddenly sounded, without having given us the ghost of a chance to ‘land him one where he lived.’ Judging from his previous exertions, though, it was hardly possible he would be able to stay down long, or get very deep, as the strain upon these vast creatures at any depth is astonishingly exhausting. After a longer stay below than usual, when they have gone extra deep, they often arrive at the surface manifestly ‘done up’ for a time. Then, if the whaleman be active and daring, a few well-directed strokes may be got in which will promptly settle the business out of hand.

Now, when my whale sounded he was to all appearance as frightened a beast as one could wish—one who had run himself out endeavouring to get away from his enemies, and as a last resource had dived into the quietness below in the vain hope to get away. So I regarded him, making up my mind to wait on him with diligence upon his arrival, and not allow him to get breath before I had settled him. But when he did return, there was a mighty difference in him. He seemed as if he had been getting some tips on the subject from some school below where whales are trained to hunt men; for his first move was to come straight for me with a furious rush, carrying the war into the enemy's country with a vengeance. It must be remembered that I was but young.



and a comparatively new hand at this sort of thing; so when I confess that I felt more than a little scared at this sudden change in the tactics of my opponent, I hope I shall be excused. Remembering, however, that all our lives depended on keeping cool, I told myself that even if I was frightened I must not go all to pieces, but compel myself to think and act calmly, since I was responsible for others. If the animal had not been in so blind a fury, I am afraid my task would have been much harder; but he was mad, and his savage rushes were, though disquieting, unsystematic and clumsy. It was essential, however, that he should not be allowed to persist too long in his evil courses; for a whale learns with amazing rapidity, developing such cunning in an hour or two that all a man's smartness may be unable to cope with his newly acquired experience. Happily, Samuela was perfectly unmoved. Like a machine, he obeyed every gesture, every look even, swinging the boat 'off' or 'on' the whale with such sweeping strokes of his mighty oar that she revolved as if on a pivot, and encouraging the other chaps with his cheerful cries and odd grimaces, so that the danger was hardly felt. During a momentary lull in the storm, I took the opportunity to load my bomb-gun, much as I disliked handling the thing, keeping my eye all the time on the water around where I expected to see mine enemy popping up murderously at any minute. Just as I had expected, when he rose, it was very close, and on his back, with his jaw in the first biting position, looking ugly as a vision of death. Finding us a little out of reach, he rolled right over towards us, presenting as he did so the great rotundity of his belly. We were not twenty feet away, and I snatched up the gun, levelled it, and fired the bomb point-blank into his bowels. Then all was blank. I do not even remember the next moment. A rush of roaring waters, a fighting with fearful, desperate energy for air and life, all in a hurried, flurried phantasmagoria about which there was nothing clear except the primitive desire for life, life, life! Nor do I know how long this struggle lasted, except that, in the nature of things, it could not have been very long.

When I returned to a consciousness of external things, I was for some time perfectly still, looking at the sky, totally unable to realize what had happened or where I was. Presently the smiling, pleasant face of Samuela bent over me. Meeting my gratified look of recognition, he set up a perfect yell of delight. 'So glad, so glad you blonga life! No go Davy Jonesy dis time, hay?' I put my hand out to help myself to a sitting posture, and touched blubber. That startled me so that I sprung up as if shot. Then I took in the situation at a glance. There were all my poor fellows with me, stranded upon the top of our late antagonist, but no sign of the

boat to be seen. Bewildered at the state of affairs, I looked appealingly from one to the other for an explanation. I got it from Abner, who said, laconically, ‘When yew fired thet ole gun, I guess it mus’ have ‘bin loaded fer bear, fer ye jest tumbled clar head over heels backwards outen the boat. Et that very same moment I suspicion the bomb busted in his belly, fer he went clean rampageous loony. He rolled right over an’ over to’rds us, n’ befo’ we c’d rightly see wat wuz comin’, we cu’dnt see anythin’ ‘tall; we wuz all grabbin’ at nothin’, some’rs underneath the whale. When I come to the top, I lit cout fer the fust thing I c’d see to lay holt of, which wuz old squarhead himself, deader ‘n pork. I guess thet ar bomb o’ yourn kinder upset his commissary department. Anyway, I climed up onto him, ‘n bime-by the rest ov us histed themselves alongside ov me. Sam Weller here; he cum last, towin’ you ‘long with him. I don’ no whar he foun’ ye, but ye was very near a goner, ‘n’s full o’ pickle as ye c’d hold.’ I turned a grateful eye upon my dusky harpooner, who had saved my life, but was now apparently blissfully unconscious of having done anything meritorious.

Behold us, then, a half-drowned row of scarecrows perched, like some new species of dilapidated birds, upon the side of our late foe. The sun was not so furiously hot as usual, for masses of rain-laden *nimbi* were filling the sky, so that we were comparatively free from the awful roasting we might have expected: nor was our position as precarious for a while as would be thought. True, we had only one harpoon, with its still fast line, to hold on by; but the side of the whale was somehow hollowed, so that, in spite of the incessant movement imparted to the carcass by the swell, we sat fairly safe, with our feet in the said hollow. We discussed the situation in all its bearings, unable to extract more than the faintest gleam of hope from any aspect of the case. The only reasonable chance we had was, that the skipper had almost certainly taken our bearings, and would, we were sure, be anxiously seeking us on the course thus indicated. Meanwhile, we were ravenously hungry and thirsty. Samuela and Polly set to work with their sheath-knives, and soon excavated a space in the blubber to enable them to reach the meat. Then they cut off some good-sized junks, and divided it up. It was not half bad; and as we chewed on the tough black fibre, I could hardly help smiling as I thought how queer a Christmas dinner we were having. But eating soon heightened our thirst, and our real sufferings then began. We could eat very little once the want of drink made itself felt. Hardly two hours had elapsed, though, before one of the big-bellied clouds which had been keeping the sun off us most considerably emptied out upon us a perfect torrent of rain. It filled the cavity in the whale’s side in a twinkling; and though the water was greasy, stained with

blood, and vilely flavoured, it was as welcome a drink as I have ever tasted. Thus fed, and with our thirst slaked, we were able to take a more hopeful view of things while the prospect of our being found seemed much more probable than it had done before the rain fell.

Still, we had to endure our pillory for a long while yet. The sharks and birds began to worry us, especially the former, who in their eagerness to get a portion of the blubber, fought, writhed and tore at the carcass with tireless energy. Once, one of the smaller ones actually came sliding up right into our hollow; but Samuela and Polly promptly dispatched him with a cut throat, sending him back to encourage the others. The present relieved us of most of their attentions for a short time at least, as they eagerly divided the remains of their late comrade among them.

To while away the time we spun yarns—without much point, I am afraid; and sung songs, albeit we did not feel much like singing till after a while our poor attempts at gaiety fizzled out like a damp match, leaving us silent and depressed. The sun, which had been hidden for some time, now came out again, his slanting beams revealing to us ominously the flight of time and the near approach of night. Should darkness overtake us in our present position, we all felt that saving us would need the performance of a miracle; for in addition to the chances of the accumulated gases within the carcass bursting it asunder, the unceasing assault of the sharks made it highly doubtful whether they would not in a few hours more have devoured it piecemeal. Already they had scooped out some deep furrows in the solid blubber, making it easier to get hold and tear off more, and their numbers were increasing so fast that the surrounding sea was fairly alive with them. Lower and lower sank the sun, deeper and darker grew the gloom upon our faces, till suddenly Samuela leaped to his feet in our midst, and emitted a yell so ear-piercing as to nearly deafen us. He saw the ship! Before two minutes had passed we all saw her—God bless her!—coming down upon us like some angelic messenger. There were no fears among us that we should be overlooked. We knew full well how anxiously and keenly many pairs of eyes had been peering over the sea in search of us, and we felt perfectly sure they had sighted us long ago. On she came, gilded by the evening glow, till she seemed glorified, moving in a halo of celestial light, all her homeliness and clumsy build forgotten in what she then represented to us.

Never before or since has a ship looked like that to me, nor can I ever forget the thankfulness, the delight, the reverence, with which I once more saw her approaching. Straight down upon us she bore, rounding to within a cable's length, and dropping a boat

simultaneously with her windward sweep. They had no whale—well for us they had not. In five minutes we were on board, while our late resting-place was being hauled alongside with great glee.

The captain shook hands with me cordially, pooh-poohing the loss of the boat as an unavoidable incident of the trade, but expressing his heart-felt delight at getting us all back safe. The whale we had killed was ample compensation for the loss of several boats, though such was the vigour with which the sharks were going for him, that it was deemed advisable to cut in at once, working all night. We who had been rescued, however, were summarily ordered below by the skipper, and forbidden, on pain of his severe displeasure, to reappear until the following morning. This great privilege we gladly availed ourselves of, awaking at daylight quite well and fit, not a bit the worse for our queer experience of the previous day.

The whale proved a great acquisition, for although not nearly so large as many we had caught, he was so amazingly rich in blubber that he actually yielded twelve and a half tuns of oil, in spite of the heavy toll taken of him by the hungry multitudes of sharks. In addition to the oil, we were fortunate enough to secure a lump of ambergris, dislodged perhaps by the explosion of my bomb in the animal's bowels. It was nearly black, wax-like to the touch, and weighed seven pounds and a half. At the current price, it would be worth about £200, so that, taken altogether, the whale very nearly approached in value the largest one we had yet caught. I had almost omitted to state that incorporated with the substance of the ambergris were several of the horny cuttle-fish beaks, which, incapable of being digested, had become in some manner part of this peculiar product.

## 20

*'Humpbacking' at Vau Vau*

ANOTHER three weeks' cruising brought us to the end of the season on the line, which had certainly not answered all our expectations, although we had perceptibly increased the old barky's draught during our stay. Whether from love of change or belief in the possibilities of a good haul, I can hardly say, but Captain Count decided to make the best of his way south, to the middle group of the 'Friendly' Archipelago, known as Vau Vau, the other portions being called Hapai and Tongataboo respectively, for a season's 'humpbacking.' From all I could gather, we were likely to have a good time there, so I looked forward to the visit with a great deal of pleasurable anticipation.

We were bound to make a call at Vau Vau, in any case, to discharge our Kanakas shipped at Honolulu, although I fervently hoped to be able to keep my brave harpooner Samuela. So when I heard of our destination, I sounded him cautiously as to his wishes in the matter, finding that, while he was both pleased with and proud of his position on board, he was longing greatly for his own orange grove and the embraces of a certain tender 'fafinè' that he averred was there awaiting him. With such excellent reasons for his leaving us, I could but forbear to persuade him, sympathizing with him too deeply to wish him away from such joys as he described to me.

So we bade farewell to the line grounds, and commenced another stretch to the south, another milestone, as it were, on the long road home. Prosaic and uneventful to the last degree was our passage, the only incident worth recording being our 'gamming' of the *Passamaquoddy*, of Martha's Vineyard, South Sea whaler; eighteen months out, with one thousand barrels of sperm oil on board. We felt quite veterans alongside of her crew, and our yarns laid over theirs to such an extent that they were quite disgusted at their lack of experience. Some of them had known our late skipper, but none of them had a good word for him, the old maxim, 'Speak nothing but good of the dead,' being most flagrantly set at nought. One of her crew was a Whitechapelian, who had been roving about the world for a good many years.

Amongst other experiences, he had, after 'jumping the bounty' two or three times, found himself a sergeant in the Federal Army before Gettysburg. During that most bloody battle, he informed me that a 'Reb' drew a bead on him at about a dozen yards' distance, and fired. He said he felt just as if somebody had punched him in the chest, and knocked him flat on his back on top of a sharp stone—no pain at all, nor any further recollection of what had happened, until he found himself at the base, in hospital. When the surgeons came to examine him for the bullet, they found that it had struck the broad brass plate of his cross-belt fairly in the middle, penetrating it and shattering his breast bone. But after torturing him vilely with the probe, they were about to give up the search in despair, when he told them he felt a pain in his back. Examining the spot indicated by him, they found a bullet just beneath the skin, which a touch with the knife allowed to tumble out. Further examination revealed the strange fact that the bullet, after striking his breast-bone, had glanced aside and travelled round his body just beneath the skin, without doing him any further harm. In proof of his story, he showed me the two scars and the perforated buckle-plate.

At another time, being in charge of a picket of Germans, he

and his command were captured by a party of Confederates, who haled him before their colonel, a southern gentleman of the old school. In the course of his interrogation by the southern officer, he was asked where he hailed from. He replied, 'London, England.' 'Then,' said the colonel, 'how is it you find yourself fighting for these accursed Yankees?' The cockney faltered out some feeble excuse or another, which his captor cut short by saying, 'I've a great respect for the English, and consequently I'll let you go this time. But if ever I catch you again, you're gone up. As for those d——d Dutchmen, they'll be strung up inside of five minutes.' And they were.

So with yarn, song, and dance, the evening passed pleasantly away; while the two old hookers jogged amicably along side by side, like two market-horses whose drivers are having a friendly crack. Along about midnight we exchanged crews again, and parted with many expressions of good-will—we to the southward, she to the eastward, for some particular preserve believed in by her commander.

In process of time we made the land of Vau Vau, a picturesque, densely wooded, and in many places precipitous, group of islands, the approach being singularly free from dangers in the shape of partly hidden reefs. Long and intricate were the passages we threaded, until we finally came to anchor in a lovely little bay perfectly sheltered from all winds. We moored, within a mile of a dazzling white beach, in twelve fathoms. A few native houses embowered in orange and cocoa-nut trees showed here and there, while the two horns of the bay were steep-to, and covered with verdure almost down to the water's edge. The anchor was hardly down before a perfect fleet of canoes flocked around us, all carrying the familiar balancing outrigger, without which those narrow dugouts cannot possibly keep upright. Their occupants swarmed on board, laughing and playing like so many children, and with all sorts of winning gestures and tones besought our friendship. 'You my flem?' was the one question which all asked; but what its import might be we could not guess for some time. By-and-by it appeared that when once you had agreed to accept a native for your 'flem,' or friend, he from henceforward felt in duty bound to attend to all your wants which it lay within his power to supply. This important preliminary settled, fruit and provisions of various kinds appeared as if by magic. Huge baskets of luscious oranges, massive bunches of gold and green bananas, clusters of green cocoa-nuts, conch-shells full of chillies, fowls loudly protesting against their hard fate, gourds full of eggs, and a few vociferous swine—all came tumbling on board in richest profusion, and, strangest thing of all, not a copper was asked in return. I might have as truly said nothing was asked, since money must have been

useless here. Many women came alongside, but none climbed on board. Surprised at this, I asked Samuela the reason, as soon as I could disengage him for a few moments from the caresses of his friends. He informed me that the ladies' reluctance to favour us with their society was owing to their being in native dress, which it is punishable to appear in among white men, the punishment consisting of a rather heavy fine. Even the men and boys, I noticed, before they ventured to climb on board, stayed a while to put on trousers, or what did duty for those useful articles of dress. At any rate, they were all clothed, not merely enwrapped with a fold or two of 'tapa,' the native bark-cloth, but made awkward and ugly by dilapidated shirts and pants.

She was a busy ship for the rest of that day. The anchor down, sails furled and decks swept, the rest of the time was our own, and high jinks were the result. The islanders were amiability personified, merry as children, nor did I see or hear one quarrelsome individual among them. While we were greedily devouring the delicious fruit, which was piled on deck in mountainous quantities, they encouraged us, telling us that the trees ashore were breaking down under their loads, and what a pity it was that there were so few to eat such bountiful supplies.

We were, it appeared, the first whale-ship that had anchored there that year, and, in that particular bay where we lay, no vessel had moored for over two years. An occasional schooner from Sydney called at the 'town' about ten miles away, where the viceroy's house was, and at the present time of speaking one of Godeffroi's Hamburg ships was at anchor there, taking in an accumulation of copra from her agent's store. But the natives all spoke of her with a shrug—'No like Tashman. Tashman no good.' Why, I could not ascertain.

Our Kanakas had promised to remain with us till our departure for the south, so, hard as it seemed to them, they were not allowed to go ashore, in case they might not come back, and leave us short-handed. But as their relatives and friends could visit them whenever they felt inclined, the restriction did not hurt them much. The next day, being Sunday, all hands were allowed liberty to go ashore by turns (except the Kanakas), with strict injunctions to molest no one, but to behave as if in a big town guarded by policemen. As no money could be spent, none was given, and, best of all, it was impossible to procure any intoxicating liquor.

Our party got ashore about 9.30, but not a soul was visible either on the beach or in the sun-lit paths which led through the forest inland. Here and there a house, with doors wide open, stood in its little cleared space, silent and deserted. It was like a country without inhabitants. Presently, however, a burst of melody arrested

us, and borne upon the scented breeze came—oh, so sweetly!—the well-remembered notes of 'Hollingside.' Hurriedly getting behind a tree, I let myself go, and had a perfectly lovely, soul-refreshing cry. Reads funny, doesn't it? Sign of weakness perhaps. But when childish memories come back upon one torrent-like in the swell of a hymn or the scent of the hawthorn, it seems to me that the floodgates open without you having anything to do with it. When I was a little chap in the Lock Chapel choir, before the evil days came, that tune was my favourite; and when I heard it suddenly come welling up out of the depths of the forest, my heart just stood still for a moment, and then the tears came. Queer idea, perhaps, to some people; but I do not know when I enjoyed myself so much as I did just then, except when a boy of sixteen home from a voyage, and strolling along the Knightsbridge Road, I 'happened' into the Albert Hall. I did not in the least know what was coming; the notices on the bills did not mean anything to me; but I paid my shilling, and went up into the gallery. I had hardly edged myself into a corner by the refreshment-stall, when a great breaker of sound caught me, hurled me out of time, though, and sense in one intolerable ecstasy—'For unto us a Child is born; unto us a Son is given'—again and again—billows and billows of glory. I gasped for breath, shook like one in an ague fit; the tears ran down in a continuous stream; while people stared amazed at me, thinking, I suppose, that I was another drunken sailor. Well, *I was* drunk, helplessly intoxicated, but not with drink, with something Divine, untellable, which, coming upon me unprepared, simply swept me away with it into a heaven of delight, to which only tears could testify.

But I am in the bush, whimpering over the tones of 'Hollingside.' As soon as I had pulled myself together a bit, we went on again in the direction of the sound. Presently we came to a large clearing, in the middle of which stood a neat wooden, pandanus-thatched church. There were no doors or windows to it, just a roof supported upon posts, but a wide verandah ran all round, upon the edge of which we seated ourselves; for the place was full—full to suffocation, every soul within miles, I should think, being there. No white man was present, but the service, which was a sort of prayer-meeting, went with a swing and go that was wonderful to see. There was no perfunctory worship here; no one languidly enduring it because it was 'the right sort of thing to show up at, you know,' but all were in earnest, terribly in earnest. When they sang, it behoved us to get away to a little distance, for the vigour of the voices, unless mellowed by distance, made the music decidedly harsh. Every one was dressed in European clothing—the women in neat calico gowns; but the men, nearly all of them, in woollen



shirts, pilot-coats, and trousers to match, and sea-boots! Whew! it nearly stifled me to look at them. The temperature was about ninety degrees in the shade, with hardly a breath of air stirring, yet those poor people, from some mistaken notion of propriety, were sweating in torrents under that Arctic rig. However they could worship, I do not know! At last the meeting broke up. The men rushed out, tore off their coats, trousers, and shirts, and flung themselves panting upon the grass, mother-naked, except for a chaplet of cocoanut leaves, formed by threading them on a vine-tendrils, and hanging round the waist.

Squatting by the side of my 'flem,' whom I had recognized, I asked him why ever he outraged all reason by putting on such clothes in this boiling weather. He looked at me pityingly for a moment before he replied, 'You go chapella Belitani? No put bes' close on top?' 'Yes,' I said; 'but in hot weather put on thin clothes; cold weather, put on thick ones.' 'S'pose no got more?' he said, meaning, I presumed, more than the one suit. 'Well,' I said, 'more better stop 'way than look like big fool, boil all away, same like duff in pot. You savvy duff?' He smiled a wide comprehensive smile, but looked very solemn again, saying directly, 'You no go chapella; you no mishnally. No mishnally [missionary=godly]; vely bad. Me no close; no go chapella; vely bad. Evelly tangata, evelly fafinè, got close all same papâlang [every man and woman has clothes like a white man]; go chapella all day Sunday.' That this was no figure of speech I proved fully that day, for I declare that the recess between any of the services never lasted more than an hour. Meanwhile the worshippers did not return to their homes, for in many cases they had journeyed twenty or thirty miles, but lay about in the verdure, refreshing themselves with fruit, principally the delightful green cocoa-nuts, which furnish meat and drink both—cool and refreshing in the extreme, as well as nourishing.

We were all heartily welcome to whatever was going, but there was a general air of restraint, a fear of breaking the Sabbath, which prevented us from trespassing too much upon the hospitality of these devout children of the sun. So we contented ourselves with strolling through the beautiful glades and woods, lying down, whenever we felt weary, under the shade of some spreading orange tree loaded with golden fruit, and eating our fill, or rather eating until the smarting of our lips warned us to desist. Here was a land where, apparently, all people were honest, for we saw a great many houses whose owners were absent, not one of which was closed, although many had a goodly store of such things as a native might be supposed to covet. At last, not being able to rid ourselves of the feeling that we were doing something wrong, the solemn silence

and Sundayfied air of the whole region seeming to forbid any levity even in the most innocent manner, we returned on board again, wonderfully impressed with what we had seen, but wondering what would have happened if some of the ruffianly crowds composing the crews of many ships had been let loose upon this fair island.

In the evening we lowered a stage over the bows to the water's edge, and had a swimming-match, the water being perfectly delightful, after the great heat of the day, in its delicious freshness; and so to bunk, well pleased indeed with our first Sunday in Vau Vau.

I have no doubt whatever that some of the gentry who swear at large about the evils of missionaries would have been lqnd in their disgust at the entire absence of drink and debauchery, and the prevalence of what they would doubtless characterize as adjective hypocrisy on the part of the natives; but no decent man could help rejoicing at the peace, the security, and friendliness manifested on every hand, nor help awarding unstinted praise to whoever had been the means of bringing about so desirable a state of things. I felt that their Sabbatarianism was carried to excess; that they would have been better, not worse, for a little less church, and a little more innocent fun; but ten thousand times better thus than such scenes of lust let loose and abandoned animalism as we witnessed at Honolulu. What pleased me mightily was the absence of the white man with his air of superiority and sleek overlordship. All the worship, all the management of affairs, was entirely in the hands of the natives themselves, and excellently well did they manage everything.

I shall never forget once going ashore in a somewhat similar place, but very far distant, one Sunday morning, to visit the mission station. It was a Church mission, and a very handsome building the church was. By the side of it stood the parsonage, a beautiful bungalow, nestling in a perfect paradise of tropical flowers. The somewhat intricate service was conducted, and the sermon preached, entirely by natives—very creditably too. After service I strolled into the parsonage to see the reverend gentleman in charge, whom I found supporting his burden in a long chair, with a tall glass of brandy and soda within easy reach, a fine cigar between his lips, and a late volume of Ouida's in his hand. All very pleasant and harmless, no doubt, but hardly reconcilable with the ideal held up in missionary magazines. Yet I have no doubt whatever that this gentleman would have been heartily commended by the very men who can hardly find words harsh enough to express their opinion of missionaries of the stamp of Paton, Williams, Moffat, and Mackenzie.

Well, it is highly probable—nay, almost certain, that I shall be accused of drawing an idyllic picture of native life from first impressions, which, if I had only had sufficient subsequent experience among the people, I should have entirely altered. All I can say is, that although I did not live among them ashore, we had a number of them on board; we lay in the island harbour five months, during which I was ashore nearly every day, and from habit I observed them very closely; yet I cannot conscientiously alter one syllable of what I have written concerning them. Bad men and women there were, of course, to be found—as where not?—but the badness, in whatever form, was not allowed to flaunt itself, and was so sternly discountenanced by public (entirely native) opinion, that it required a good deal of interested seeking to find.

But after all this chatter about my amiable friends, I find myself in danger of forgetting the purpose of our visit. We lost no time in preparation, since whaling of whatever sort is conducted in these ships on precisely similar lines, but on Monday morning, at day-break, after a hurried breakfast, lowered all boats and commenced the campaign. We were provided with boxes—one for each boat—containing a light luncheon, but no ordered meal, because it was not considered advisable to in any way hamper the boat's freedom to chase. Still, in consideration of its being promptly dumped overboard on attacking a whale, a goodly quantity of fruit was permitted in the boats.

In the calm beauty of the pearly dawn, with a gentle hush over all nature, the lofty, tree-clad hills reflected with startling fidelity in the glassy, many-coloured waters, the only sound audible the occasional cra-a-ake of the advance-guard of a flight of fruit-bats (*pēca*) homeward from their nocturnal depredations, we shipped our oars and started, pulling to a certain position whence we could see over an immense area. Immediately upon rounding the horn of our sheltered bay, the fresh breeze of the south-east trades met us right on end with a vigour that made a ten-mile steady pull against it somewhat of a breather. Arriving at the station indicated by the chief, we set sail, and, separating as far as possible without losing sight of each other, settled down for the day's steady cruise. Anything more delightful than that excursion to those who love seashore scenery combined with boat-sailing would be difficult to name. Every variety of landscape, every shape of strait, bay, or estuary, reefs awash, reefs over which we could sail, ablaze with loveliness inexpressible; a steady, gentle, caressing breeze, and overhead one unvarying canopy of deepest blue. Sometimes, when skirting the base of some tremendous cliffs, great caution was necessary, for at one moment there would obtain a calm, death-like in its stillness; the next, down through a cañon cleaving the moun-

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tain to the water's edge would come rushing, with a shrill howl, a blast fierce enough to almost lift us out of the water. Away we would scud with flying sheets dead before it, in a smother of spray, but would hardly get full way on her before it was gone, leaving us in the same hush as before, only a dark patch on the water far to leeward marking its swift rush. These little diversions gave us no uneasiness, for it was an unknown thing to make a sheet fast in one of our boats, so that a puff of wind never caught us unprepared.

On that first day we seemed to explore such a variety of stretches of water that one would hardly have expected there could be any more discoveries to make in that direction. Nevertheless, each day's cruise subsequently revealed to us some new nook or other, some quiet haven or pretty passage between islands that, until closely approached, looked like one. When, at sunset, we returned to the ship, not having seen anything like a spout, I felt like one who had been in a dream, the day's cruise having surpassed all my previous experience. Yet it was but the precursor of many such. Oftentimes I think of those halcyon days, with a sigh of regret that they can never more be renewed to me; but I rejoice to think that nothing can rob me of the memory of them.

Much to the discomfort of the skipper, it was four days before a solitary spout was seen, and then it was so nearly dark that before the fish could be reached it was impossible to distinguish her whereabouts. A careful bearing was taken of the spot, in the hope that she might be lingering in the vicinity next morning, and we hastened on board.

Before it was fairly light we lowered, and paddled as swiftly as possible to the bay where we had last seen the spout overnight. When near the spot we rested on our paddles a while, all hands looking out with intense eagerness for the first sign of the whale's appearance. There was a strange feeling among us of unlawfulness and stealth, as of ambushed pirates waiting to attack some unwary merchantman, or highwaymen waylaying a fat alderman on a country road. We spoke in whispers, for the morning was so still that a voice raised but ordinarily would have reverberated among the rocks which almost overhung us, multiplied indefinitely. A turtle rose ghost-like to the surface at my side, lifting his queer head, and, surveying us with stony gaze, vanished as silently as he came.

What a sigh! One looked at the other inquiringly, but the repetition of that long expiration satisfied us all that it was the placid breathing of the whale we sought somewhere close at hand. The light grew rapidly better, and we strained our eyes in every direction to discover the whereabouts of our friend, but for some minutes without result. There was a ripple just audible, and away

glided the mate's boat right for the near shore. Following him with our eyes, we almost immediately beheld a pale, shadowy column of white, shimmering against the dark mass of the cliff not a quarter of a mile away. Dipping our paddles with the utmost care, we made after the chief, almost holding our breath. His harpooner rose, darted once, twice, then gave a yell of triumph that ran re-echoing all around in a thousand eerie vibrations, startling the drowsy *pēca* in myriads from where they hung in inverted clusters on the trees above. But, for all the notice taken by the whale, she might never have been touched. Close nestled to her side was a youngling of not more, certainly, than five days old, which sent up its baby-spout every now and then about two feet into the air. One long, wing-like fin embraced its small body, holding it close to the massive breast of the tender mother, whose only care seemed to be to protect her young, utterly regardless of her own pain and danger. If sentiment were ever permitted to interfere with such operations as ours, it might well have done so now; for while the calf continually sought to escape from the enfolding fin, making all sorts of puny struggles in the attempt, the mother scarcely moved from her position, although streaming with blood from a score of wounds. Once, indeed, as a deep-searching thrust entered her very vitals, she raised her massy flukes high in air with an apparently involuntary movement of agony; but even in that dire throe she remembered the possible danger to her young one, and laid the tremendous weapon as softly down upon the water as if it were a feather fan.

So in the most perfect quiet, with scarcely a writhe, nor any sign of flurry, she died, holding the calf to her side until her last vital spark had fled, and left it to a swift despatch with a single lance-thrust. No slaughter of a lamb ever looked more like murder. Nor, when the vast bulk and strength of the animal was considered, could a mightier example have been given of the force and quality of maternal love.

The whole business was completed in half an hour from the first sight of her, and by the mate's hand alone, none of the other boats needing to use their gear. As soon as she was dead, a hole was bored through the lips, into which a tow-line was secured, the two long fins were lashed close into the sides of the animal by an encircling line, the tips of the flukes were cut off, and away we started for the ship. We had an eight-mile tow in the blazing sun, which we accomplished in a little over eight hours, arriving at the vessel just before two p.m. News of our coming had preceded us, and the whole native population appeared to be afloat to make us welcome. The air rang again with their shouts of rejoicing, for our catch represented to them a gorgeous feast, such as they had not

indulged in for many a day. The flesh of the humpbacked whale is not at all bad, being but little inferior to that of the porpoise; so that, as these people do not despise even the coarse rank flesh of the cachalot, their enthusiasm was natural. Their offers of help were rather embarrassing to us, as we could find little room for any of them in the boats, and the canoes only got in our way. Unable to assist us, they vented their superfluous energies on the whale in the most astounding aquatic antics imaginable—diving under it; climbing on to it; pushing and rolling each other headlong over its broad back; shrieking all the while with the frantic, uncontrollable laughter of happy children all mixed in this wild, watery spree; and as to any of them getting drowned, the idea was utterly absurd.

When we got it alongside, and prepared to cut in, all the chaps were able to have a rest, there were so many eager volunteers to man the windlass, not only willing, but, under the able direction of their compatriots belonging to our crew, quite equal to the work of heaving in blubber. All their habitual indolence was cast aside. Toiling like Trojans, they made the old windlass rattle again as they spun the brakes up and down, every blanket-piece being hailed with a fresh volley of eldritch shrieks, enough to alarm a deaf and dumb asylum.

With such ample aid, it was, as may be supposed a brief task to skin our prize, although the strange arrangement of the belly blubber caused us to lift some disappointing lengths. This whale has the blubber underneath the body lying in longitudinal corrugations, which, when hauled off the carcass at right angles to their direction, stretch out flat to four or five times their normal area. Thus, when the cutting-blocks had reached their highest limit, and the piece was severed from the body, the folds flew together again, leaving dangling aloft but a miserable square of some four or five feet, instead of a fine 'blanket' of blubber twenty by five. Along the edges of these *rugæ*, as also upon the rim of the lower jaw, abundance of limpets and barnacles had attached themselves, some of the former large as a horse's hoof, and causing prodigious annoyance to the toiling carpenter, whose duty it was to keep the spades ground. It was no unusual thing for a spade to be handed in with two or three gaps in its edge half an inch deep, where they had accidentally come across one of those big pieces of flinty shell, undistinguishable from the grey substance of the belly blubber.

But, in spite of these drawbacks, in less than ninety minutes the last cut was reached, the vertebra severed, and away went the great mass of meat, in tow of countless canoes, to an adjacent point, where, in eager anticipation, fires were already blazing for the coming cookery. An enormous number of natives had gathered

## PROGRESS OF THE 'HUMPBACK' SEASON

from far and near, late arrivals continually dropping in from all points of the compass with breathless haste. No danger of going short need have troubled them, for, large as were their numbers, the supply was evidently fully equal to all demands. All night long the feast proceeded, and, even when morning dawned, busy figures were still discernible coming and going between the reduced carcass and the fires, as if determined to make an end of it before their operations ceased.

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#### *Progress of the 'Humpback' Season*

It will probably be inferred from the foregoing paragraph that we were little troubled with visits from the natives next day; but it would be doing them an injustice if I omitted to state that our various 'flems' put in an appearance as usual with their daily offerings of fruit, vegetables, etc. They all presented a somewhat jaded and haggard look, as of men who had dined not wisely but too well, nor did the odour of stale whale-meat that clung to them add to their attractions. Repentance for excesses or gluttony did not seem to trouble them, for they evidently considered it would have been a sin not to take with both hands the gifts the gods had so bountifully provided. Still, they did not stay long, feeling, no doubt, sore need of a prolonged rest after their late arduous exertions; so, after affectionate farewells, they left us again to our greasy task of trying-out.

The cow proved exceedingly fat, making us, though by no means a large specimen, fully fifty barrels of oil. The whalebone (baleen) was so short as to be not worth the trouble of curing, so, with the exception of such pieces as were useful to the 'scrimshoners' for ornamenting their nicknacks, it was not preserved. On the evening of the third day the work was so far finished that we were able to go ashore for clothes-washing which necessary process was accompanied with a good deal of fun and hilarity. In the morning cruising was resumed again.

For a couple of days we met with no success, although we had a very aggravating chase after some smart bulls we fell in with, to our mutual astonishment, just as we rounded a point of the outermost island. They were lazily sunning themselves close under the lee of the cliffs, which at that point were steep-to, having a depth of about twenty fathoms close alongside. A fresh breeze was blowing, so we came round the point at a great pace, being almost among them before they had time to escape. They went away gaily along the land, not attempting to get seaward, we straining

every nerve to get alongside of them. Whether they were tantalizing us or not, I cannot say, but certainly it looked like it. In spite of their well-known speed, we were several times so close in their wake that the harpooners loosed the tacks of the jibs to get a clear shot; but as they did so the nimble monsters shot ahead a length or two, leaving us just out of reach. It was a fine chase while it lasted, though annoying; yet one could hardly help feeling amused at the way they wallowed along—just like a school of exaggerated porpoises. At last, after nearly two hours of the fun, they seemed to have had enough of it, and with one accord headed seaward at a greatly accelerated pace, as who should say, 'Well, s' long, boys: company's very pleasant and all that, but we've got important business over at Fiji, and can't stay fooling around here any longer.' In a quarter of an hour they were out of sight, leaving us disgusted and outclassed pursuers sneaking back again to shelter, feeling very small. Not that we could have had much hope of success under the circumstances, knowing the peculiar habits of the hump-back and the almost impossibility of competing with him in the open sea; but they had lured us on to forget all these things in the ardour of the chase, and then exposed our folly.

Then ensued a week or two of uneventful cruising, broken only by the capture of a couple of cows—one just after the fruitless chase mentioned above, and one several days later. These events, though interesting enough to us, were marked by no such deviation from the ordinary course as to make them worthy of special attention; nor do I think that the cold-blooded killing of a cow-whale, who dies patiently endeavouring to protect her young, is a subject that lends itself to eulogium.

However, just when the delightful days were beginning to pall upon us, a real adventure befell us, which, had we been attending strictly to business, we should not have encountered. For a week previous we had been cruising constantly without ever seeing a spout, except those belonging to whales out at sea, whither we knew it was folly to follow them. We tried all sorts of games to while away the time, which certainly did hang heavy, the most popular of which was for the whole crew of the boat to strip, and, getting overboard, be towed along at the ends of short warps, while I sailed her. It was quite mythological—a sort of rude reproduction of Neptune and his attendant Tritons. At last, one afternoon as we were listlessly lolling (half asleep, except the look-out man) across the thwarts, we suddenly came upon a gorge between two cliffs that we must have passed before several times unnoticed. At a certain angle it opened, disclosing a wide sheet of water, extending a long distance ahead. I put the helm up, and we ran through the passage, finding it about a boat's length in width and several



fathoms deep, though overhead the cliffs nearly came together in places. Within, the scene was very beautiful, but not more so than many similar ones we had previously witnessed. Still, as the place was new to us, our languor was temporarily dispelled, and we paddled along, taking in every feature of the shores with keen eyes that let nothing escape. After we had gone on in this placid manner for maybe an hour, we suddenly came to a stupendous cliff—that is, for those parts—rising almost sheer from the water for about a thousand feet. Of itself it would not have arrested our attention, but at its base was a semicircular opening, like the mouth of a small tunnel. This looked alluring, so I headed the boat for it, passing through a deep channel between two reefs which led straight to the opening. There was ample room for us to enter, as we had lowered the mast; but just as we were passing through, a heave of the unnoticed swell lifted us unpleasantly near the crown of this natural arch. Beneath us, at a great depth, the bottom could be dimly discerned, the water being of the richest blue conceivable, which the sun, striking down through, resolved into some most marvellous colour-schemes in the path of its rays. A delicious sense of coolness, after the fierce heat outside, saluted us as we entered a vast hall, whose roof rose to a minimum height of forty feet, but in places could not be seen at all. A sort of diffused light, weak, but sufficient to reveal the general contour of the place, existed, let in, I supposed, through some unseen crevices in the roof or walls. At first, of course, to our eyes fresh from the fierce glare outside, the place seemed wrapped in impenetrable gloom, and we dared not stir lest we should run into some hidden danger. Before many minutes, however, the gloom lightened as our pupils enlarged, so that, although the light was faint, we could find our way about with ease. We spoke in low tones, for the echoes were so numerous and resonant that even a whisper gave back from those massy walls in a series of recurring hisses, as if a colony of snakes had been disturbed.

We paddled on into the interior of this vast cave, finding everywhere the walls rising sheer from the silent, dark waters, not a ledge or a crevice where one might gain foothold. Indeed, in some places there was a considerable overhang from above, as if a great dome whose top was invisible sprang from some level below the water. We pushed ahead until the tiny semicircle of light through which we had entered was only faintly visible; and then, finding there was nothing to be seen except what we were already witnessing, unless we cared to go on into the thick darkness, which extended apparently into the bowels of the mountain, we turned and started to go back. Do what we would, we could not venture to break the solemn hush that surrounded us as if we were shut

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within the dome of some vast cathedral in the twilight. So we paddled noiselessly along for the exit, till suddenly an awful, inexplicable roar set all our hearts thumping fit to break our bosoms. Really, the sensation was most painful, especially as we had not the faintest idea whence the noise came or what had produced it. Again it filled that immense cave with its thunderous reverberations; but this time all the sting was taken out of it, as we caught sight of its author. A goodly bull-humpback had found his way in after us, and the sound of his spout, exaggerated a thousand times in the confinement of that mighty cavern, had frightened us all so that we nearly lost our breath. So far, so good; but, unlike the old nigger, though we were 'doin' blame well,' we did not 'let blame well alone.' The next spout that intruder gave, he was right alongside of us. 'This was too much for the semi-savage instincts of my gallant harpooner, and before I had time to shout a caution he had plunged his weapon deep into old Blowhard's broad back.

I should like to describe what followed, but, in the first place, I hardly know; and, in the next, even had I been cool and collected, my recollections would sound like the ravings of a fevered dream. For of all the hideous uproars conceivable, that was, I should think, about the worst. The big mammal seemed to have gone frantic with the pain of his wound, the surprise of the attack, and the hampering confinement in which he found himself. His tremendous struggles caused such a commotion that our position could only be compared to that of men shooting Niagara in a cylinder at night. How we kept afloat, I do not know. Some one had the gumption to cut the line, so that by the radiation of the disturbance we presently found ourselves close to the wall, and trying to hold the boat in to it with our finger-tips. Would he never be quiet? we thought, as the thrashing, banging, and splashing still went on with unfailing vigour. At last, in, I suppose, one supreme effort to escape, he leaped clear of the water like a salmon. There was a perceptible hush, during which we shrank together like unfledged chickens on a frosty night; then, in a never-to-be-forgotten crash that ought to have brought down the massy roof, that mountainous carcass fell. The consequent violent upheaval of the water should have smashed the boat against the rocky walls, but that final catastrophe was mercifully spared us. I suppose the rebound was sufficient to keep us a safe distance off.

A perfect silence succeeded, during which we sat speechless, awaiting a resumption of the clamour. At last Abner broke the heavy silence by saying, 'I doan' see the do'way any mo' at all, sir.' He was right. The tide had risen, and that half-moon of light had disappeared, so that we were now prisoners for many hours, it not being at all probable that we should be able to find our way out

during the night ebb. Well, we were not exactly children, to be afraid of the dark, although there is considerable difference between the velvety darkness of a dungeon and the clear, fresh night of the open air. Still, as long as that beggar of a whale would only keep quiet or leave the premises, we should be fairly comfortable. We waited and waited until an hour had passed, and then came to the conclusion that our friend was either dead or gone out, as he gave no sign of his presence.

That being settled, we anchored the boat, and lit pipes, preparatory to passing as comfortable a night as might be under the circumstances, the only thing troubling me being the anxiety of the skipper on our behalf. Presently the blackness beneath was lit up by a wide band of phosphoric light, shed in the wake of no ordinary-sized fish, probably an immense shark. Another and another followed in rapid succession, until the depths beneath were all ablaze with brilliant footwide ribands of green glare, dazzling to the eye and bewildering to the brain. Occasionally, a gentle splash or ripple alongside, or a smart tap on the bottom of the boat, warned us how thick the concourse was that had gathered below. Until that weariness which no terror is proof against set in, sleep was impossible, nor could we keep our anxious gaze from that glowing inferno beneath, where one would have thought all the population of Tartarus were holding high revel. Mercifully, at last we sank into a fitful slumber, though fully aware of the great danger of our position. One upward rush of any of those ravening monsters, happening to strike the frail shell of our boat, and a few fleeting seconds would have sufficed for our obliteration as if we had never been.

But the terrible night passed away, and once more we saw the tender, iridescent light stream into that abode of dread. As the day strengthened, we were able to see what was going on below, and a grim vision it presented. The water was literally alive with sharks of enormous size, tearing with never-ceasing energy at the huge carcass of the whale lying on the bottom, who had met his fate in a singular but not unheard-of way. At that last titanic effort of his he had rushed downward with such terrific force that, striking his head on the bottom, he had broken his neck. I felt very grieved that we had lost the chance of securing him; but it was perfectly certain that before we could get help to raise him, all that would be left on his skeleton would be quite valueless to us. So with such patience as we could command we waited near the entrance until the receding ebb made it possible for us to emerge once more into the blessed light of day. I was horrified at the haggard, careworn appearance of my crew, who had all, excepting the two Kanakas, aged perceptibly during that night of torment. But we lost no

time in getting back to the ship, where I fully expected a severe wiggling for the scrape my luckless curiosity had led me into. The captain, however, was very kind, expressing his pleasure at seeing us all safe back again, although he warned me solemnly against similar investigations in future. A hearty meal and a good rest did wonders in removing the severe effects of our adventure, so that by next morning we were all fit and ready for the day's work again.

It certainly seemed as if I was in for a regular series of troubles. After cruising till nearly two p.m., we fell in with the mate's boat, and were sailing quietly along side by side, when we suddenly rounded a point and ran almost on top of a bull-humpback that was basking in the beautiful sunshine. The mate's harpooner, a wonderfully smart fellow, was not so startled as to lose his chance, getting an iron well home before the animal realized what had befallen him. We had a lovely fight, lasting over an hour, in which all the marvellous agility with which this whale is gifted was exerted to the full in order to make his escape. But with the bottom not twenty fathoms away, we were sure of him. With all his supple smartness, he had none of the dogged savagery of the cachalot about him, nor did we feel any occasion to beware of his rushes, rather courting them, so as to finish the game as quickly as possible.

He was no sooner dead than we hurried to secure him, and had actually succeeded in passing the towline through his lips, when, in the trifling interval that passed while we were taking the line aft to begin towing, he started to sink. Of course it was, 'Let go all!' If you can only get the slightest way on a whale of this kind, you are almost certain to be able to keep him afloat, but once he begins to sink you cannot stop him. Down he went, till full twenty fathoms beneath us he lay comfortably on the reef, while we looked ruefully at one another. We had no gear with us fit to raise him, and we were ten miles from the ship; evening was at hand, so our prospects of doing anything that night were faint.

However, the mate decided to start off for home at once, leaving us there, but promising to send back a boat as speedily as possible with provisions and gear for the morning. There was a stiff breeze blowing, and he was soon out of sight; but we were very uncomfortable. The boat, of course, rode like a duck, but we were fully exposed to the open sea; and the mighty swell of the Pacific, rolling in over those comparatively shallow grounds, sometimes looked dangerously like breaking. Still, it was better than the cave, and there was a good prospect of supper. Long before we expected her, back came the boat, bringing bountiful provision of yams, cold pork and fruit—a regular banquet to men who were fasting since daylight. A square meal, a comforting pipe, and the night's vigil, which had looked so formidable, no longer troubled us, although,

to tell the truth, we were heartily glad when the dawn began to tint the east with pale emerald and gold. We set to work at once, getting the huge carcass to the surface without as much labour as I had anticipated. Of course all hands came to the rescue.

But, alas for the fruit of our labours! Those hungry monsters had collected in thousands, and, to judge from what we were able to see of the body, they had reduced its value alarmingly. However, we commenced towing, and were getting along fairly well, when a long spur of reef to leeward of us, over which the sea was breaking frightfully, seemed to be stretching farther out to intercept us before we could get into smooth water. The fact soon faced us that we were in the remorseless grip of a current that set right over that reef and against its steady stream all our efforts were the merest triviality. Still, we hung on, struggling desperately to keep what we had earned, until so close to the roaring, foaming line of broken water, that one wave breaking farther out than the rest very nearly swamped us all. One blow of an axe, one twirl of the steer-oars, and with all the force we could muster we were pulling away from the very jaws of death, leaving our whale to the hungry crowds, who would make short work of him. Downcast indeed, at our bad luck, we returned on board, disappointing the skipper very much with our report. Like the true gentleman he was, though, recognizing that we had done our best, he did not add to the trouble by cursing us all for a set of useless trash, as his predecessor would have done; on the contrary, a few minutes after the receipt of the bad news his face was as bright as ever, his laugh as hearty as if there was no such thing as a misfortune in the world.

And now I must come to what has been on my mind so long—a tragedy that, in spite of all that had gone before, and of what came after, is the most indelible of all the memories which cling round me of that eventful time. Abner Cushing, the Vermonter, had declared at different times that he should never see his native Green Mountain again. Since the change in our commander, however, he had been another man—always silent and reserved, but brighter, happier, and with a manner so improved as to make it hard to recognize him for the same awkward, ungainly slab of a fellow that had bungled everything he put his hand to. Taking stock of him quietly during our day-long leisurely cruises in the boat, I often wondered whether his mind still kept its gloomy forebodings, and brooded over his tragical life-history. I never dared to speak to him on the subject, for fear of arousing what I hoped was growing too faint for remembrance. But at times I saw him in the moonlit evenings sitting on the rail alone, steadfastly gazing down into the star-besprent waters beneath him, as if coveting their unruffled peace.

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

Two-thirds of our stay in the islands had passed away, when, for a wonder, the captain took it into his head to go up to the chief village one morning. So he retained me on board, while the other three boats left for the day's cruise as usual. One of the mate's crew was sick, and to replace him he took Abner out of my boat. Away they went; and shortly after breakfast-time I lowered, received the captain on board, and we started for the capital. Upon our arrival there we interviewed the chief, a stout, pleasant-looking man of about fifty, who was evidently held in great respect by the natives, and had a chat with the white Wesleyan missionary in charge of the station. About two p.m., after the captain's business was over, we were returning under sail, when we suddenly caught sight of two of our boats heading in towards one of the islands. We helped her with the paddles to get up to them, seeing as we neared them the two long fins of a whale close ahead of one of them. As we gazed breathlessly at the exciting scene, we saw the boat rush in between the two flippers, the harpooner at the same time darting an iron straight down. There was a whirl in the waters, and quick as thought the vast flukes of the whale rose in the air, recurving with a sidelong sweep as of some gigantic scythe. The plow shore off the bow of the attacking boat as if it had been an egg-shell.

At the same moment the mate stooped, picked up the tow-line from its turn round the logger-head, and threw it forward from him. He must have unconsciously given a twist to his hand, for the line fell in a kink round Abner's neck just as the whale went down with a rush. Struggling, clutching at the fatal noose, the hapless man went flying out through the incoming sea, and in one second was lost to sight for ever. Too late, the harpooner cut the line which attached the wreck to the retreating animal, leaving the boat free, but gunwale under. We instantly hauled alongside of the wreck and transferred her crew, all dazed and horror-stricken at the awful death of their late comrade.

I saw the tears trickle down the rugged, mahogany-coloured face of the captain, and honoured him for it, but there was little time to waste in vain regrets. It was necessary to save the boat, if possible, as we were getting short of boat-repairing material; certainly we should not have been able to build a new one. So, drawing the two sound boats together, one on either side of the wreck, we placed the heavy steering oars across them from side to side. We then lifted the battered fore part upon the first oar, and with a big effort actually succeeded in lifting the whole of the boat out of water upon this primitive pontoon. Then, taking the jib, we 'frapped' it round the opening where the bows had been, lashing it securely in that position. Several hands were told off to

## PROGRESS OF THE 'HUMPBACK' SEASON

jump into her stern on the word, and all being ready we launched her again. The weight of the chaps in her stern-sheets cocked her bows right out of water, and in that position we towed her back to the ship, arriving safely before dusk.

That evening we held a burial service, at which hundreds of natives attended with a solemnity of demeanour and expressions of sorrow that would not have been out of place at the most elaborate funeral in England or America. It was a memorable scene. The big cressets were lighted, shedding their wild glare over the dark sea, and outlining the spars against the moonless sky with startling effect. When we had finished the beautiful service, the natives, as if swayed by an irresistible impulse, broke into the splendid tune St. Ann's; and I afterwards learned that the words they sang were Dr. Watts' unsurpassable rendering of Moses' psalm, of praise, 'O God, our help in ages past.' No elaborate ceremonial in towering cathedral could begin to compare with the massive simplicity of poor Abner's funeral honours, the stately hills for many miles reiterating the sweet sounds, and carrying them to the farthest confines of the group.

Next day was Sunday, and, in pursuance of a promise given some time before, I went ashore to my 'flem's' to dinner, he being confined to the house with a hurt leg. It was not by any means a festive gathering, for he was more than commonly taciturn; his daughter Irene, a buxom lassie of fourteen, who waited on us, appeared to be dumb; and his wife was 'in the straw.' These trifling drawbacks, however, in nowise detracted from the hospitality offered. The dining-room was a large apartment furnished with leaves, the uprights of cocoa-nut tree, the walls and roof of pandanus leaf. Beneath the heaps of leaves, fresh and sweet-scented, was the earth. The inner apartment, or chamber of state, had a flooring of highly-polished planks, and contained, I presume, the household gods; but as it was in possession of my host's secluded spouse, I did not enter.

A couch upon a pile of leaves was hastily arranged, upon which I was bidden to seat myself, while a freshly cut cocoa-nut of enormous size was handed to me, the soft top sliced off so that I might drink its deliciously cool contents. These nuts must grow elsewhere, but I have never before or since seen any so large. When green—that is, before the meat has hardened into indigestible matter—they contain from three pints to two quarts of liquid, at once nourishing, refreshing, and palatable. The natives appeared to drink nothing else, and I never saw a drop of fresh water ashore during our stay.

Taking a huge knife from some hiding-place, Irene handed it to her father, who at once commenced to dig in the ground by his

side, while I looked on wondering and amused. Presently he fished up a bundle of leaves bound with a vine-tendrill, which he laid carefully aside. More digging brought to light a fine yam about three pounds in weight, which, after carefully wiping the knife on some leaves, he proceeded to peel. It was immediately evident that the yam was perfectly cooked, for it steamed as he removed the skin, revealing the inside as white as milk. Some large, round leaves were laid in front of me, and the yam placed upon them. Then mine host turned his attention to the bundle first unearthed, which concealed a chicken, so perfectly done that, although the bones drew out of the meat as if it had been jelly, it was full of juice and flavour; and except for a slight foreign twang, referable, doubtless, to the leaves in which it had been enwrapped, I do not think it could have been possible to cook anything in a better way, or one more calculated to retain all the natural juices of the meat. The fowl was laid beside the yam, another nut broached; then, handing me the big knife, my 'flem' bade me welcome, informing me that I saw my dinner. As nothing would induce him to join me, the idea being contrary to his notions of respect due to a guest, I was fain to fall to, and an excellent meal I made. For dessert, a basketful of such oranges freshly plucked as cannot be tasted under any other conditions, and crimson bananas, which upon being peeled, looked like curved truncheons of golden jelly, after tasting which I refused to touch anything else.

A corn-cob cigarette closed the banquet. After expressing my thanks, I noticed that the pain of his leg was giving my friend considerable uneasiness, which he was stolidly enduring upon my account rather than appear discourteously anxious to get rid of me. So, with the excuse that I must needs be going, having another appointment, I left the good fellow and strolled around to the chapel, where I sat enjoying the sight of those simple-minded Kanakas at their devotions till it was time to return on board. Before closing this chapter, I would like, for the benefit of such of my readers who have not heard yet of Kanaka cookery, to say that it is simplicity itself. A hole is scooped in the earth, in which a fire is made (of wood), and kept burning until a fair-sized heap of glowing charcoal remains. Pebbles are then thrown in until the charcoal is covered. Whatever is to be cooked is enveloped in leaves, placed upon the pebbles, and more leaves heaped upon it. The earth is then thrown back into the cavity, and well stamped down. A long time is, of course, needed for the viands to get cooked through; but so subtle is the mode that overdoing anything is almost an impossibility. A couple of days may pass from the time of 'putting down' the joint, yet when it is dug up it will be smoking hot, retaining all its juices, tender as jelly, but, withal, as full of



flavour as it is possible for cooked meat to be. No matter how large the joint is, or how tough the meat, this gentle suasion will render it succulent and tasty; and no form of civilized cookery can in the least compare with it.

## 22

*Farewell to Vau Vau*

TAKING it all round, our visit to the Friendly Islands had not been particularly fortunate up till the time of which I spoke at the conclusion of the last chapter. Two-thirds of the period during which the season was supposed to last had expired, but our catch had not amounted to more than two hundred and fifty barrels of oil. Whales had been undoubtedly scarce, for our ill-success on tackling bulls was not at all in consequence of our clumsiness, these agile animals being always a handful, but due to the lack of cows, which drove us to take whatever we could get, which, as has been noted, was sometimes a severe drubbing. Energy and watchfulness had been manifested in a marked degree by everybody, and when the news circulated that our stay was drawing to a close, there was, if anything, an increase of zeal in the hope that we might yet make a favourable season.

But none of these valuable qualities exhibited by us could make up for the lack of 'fish' which was lamentably evident. It was not easy to understand why, because these islands were noted as a breeding-place for the humpbacked whale. Yet for years they had not been fished, so that a plausible explanation of the paucity of their numbers as a consequence of much harassing could not be reasonably offered. Still, after centuries of whale-fishing, little is known of the real habits of whales. Where there is abundance of 'feed,' in the case of *Mysticeta* it may be reasonably inferred that whales may be found in proportionately greater numbers. With regard to the wider-spread classes of the great marine mammalia, beyond the fact, ascertained from continued observation, that certain parts of the ocean are more favoured by them than others, there is absolutely no data to go upon as to why at times they seem to desert their usual haunts and scatter themselves far and wide.

The case of the cachalot is still more difficult. All the *Balaena* seem to be compelled, by laws which we can only guess at, to frequent the vicinity of land possessing shallows at their breeding times, so that they may with more or less certainty be looked for in such places at the seasons which have been accurately fixed. They may be driven to seek other haunts, as was undoubtedly the case at Vau Vau in a great measure, by some causes unknown, but

to land they must come at those times. The sperm whale, however, needs no shelter at such periods, or, at any rate, does not avail herself of any. They may often be seen in the vicinity of land where the water is deep close to, but seldom with calves. Schools of cows with recently born young gambolling about them are met with at immense distances from land, showing no disposition to seek shelter either. For my part, I firmly believe that the cachalot is so terrible a foe, that the great sharks who hover round a gravid cow of the *Balaenæ*, driving her in terror to some shallow spot where she may hope to protect her young, never dare to approach a sperm cow on kidnapping errands, or any other if they can help it, until their unerring guides inform them that life is extinct. When a sperm whale is in health, nothing that inhabits the sea has any chance with him: neither does he scruple to carry the war into the enemy's country, since all is fish that comes to his net, and a shark fifteen feet in length has been found in the stomach of a cachalot.

The only exception he seems to make is in the case of man. Instances have several—nay, many times occurred where men have been slain by the jaws of a cachalot crushing the boat in which they were; but their death was of course incidental to the destruction of the boat. Never, as far as I have been able to ascertain, has a cachalot attacked a man swimming or clinging to a piece of wreckage, although such opportunities occur innumerable. I have in another place told the story of how I once saw a combat between a bull-cachalot and so powerful a combination of enemies that even one knowing the fighting qualities of the sperm whale would have hesitated to back him to win, but the yarn will bear repetition.

Two 'killers' and a sword-fish, all of the largest size. Description of these warriors is superfluous, since they are so well known to museums and natural histories; but unless one has witnessed the charge of a *Xiphias*, he cannot realize what a fearful foe it is. Still, as a practice, these creatures leave the cachalot respectfully alone, knowing instinctively that he is not their game. Upon this memorable occasion, however, I guess the two *Orcas* were starving, and they had organized a sort of forlorn hope with the *Xiphias* as an auxiliary who might be relied upon to ensure success if it could be done. Anyhow, the syndicate led off with their main force first; for while the two killers hung on the cachalot's flanks, diverting his attention, the sword-fish, a giant some sixteen feet long, launched himself at the most vulnerable part of the whale, for all the world like a Whitehead torpedo. The wary eye of the whale saw the long, dark mass coming, and, like a practised pugilist, coolly swerved, taking for the nonce no notice of those worrying wolves astern. The shock came; but instead of the sword penetrating three, or maybe four feet just where the neck (if a whale

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has any neck) encloses the huge heart, it met the mighty, impenetrable mass of the head, solid as a block of thirty tons of india-rubber.

So the blow glanced, revealing a white streak running diagonally across the eye, while the great *Xiphias* rolled helplessly over the top of that black bastion. With a motion so rapid that the eye could scarcely follow it, the whale turned, settling withal, and, catching the momentarily motionless aggressor in the lethal sweep of those awful shears, crunched him in two halves, which writhing sections he swallowed *seriatim*. And the allied forces aft—what of them? Well, they had been rash—they fully realized that fact, and would have fled, but one certainly found that he had lingered on the scene too long. The thoroughly-roused leviathan, with a reversal of his huge bulk that made the sea boil like a pot, brandished his tail aloft and brought it down upon the doomed 'killer,' making him at once the 'killed.' He was crushed like a shrimp under one's heel.

The survivor fled—never faster—for an avalanche of living, furious flesh was behind him, and coming with enormous leaps half out of the sea every time. Thus they disappeared, but I have no doubts as to the issue. Of one thing I am certain—that, if any of the trio survived, they never afterwards attempted to rush a cachalot.

Strange to say, the sperm whale does not appear to be a fond mother. At the advent of danger she often deserts her offspring, and in such cases it is hardly conceivable that she ever finds it again. It is true that she is not gifted with such long 'arms' as the *Balaena*, wherewith to cuddle her young one to her capacious bosom while making tracks from her enemies; nor is she much 'on the fight,' not being so liberally furnished with jaw as the fierce and much larger bull—for this is the only species of whale in which there exists a great disproportion between the sexes in point of size. Such difference as may obtain between the *Mysticeta* is slightly in favour of the female. I never heard of a cow-cachalot yielding more than fifty barrels of oil; but I have both heard of, and seen, bulls carrying one hundred and fifty. One individual taken by us down south was seventy feet long, and furnished us with more than the latter amount; but I shall come to him by-and-by. Just one more point before leaving this (to me) fascinating subject for the present.

To any one studying the peculiar configuration of a cachalot's mouth, it would appear a difficult problem how the calf could suck. Certainly it puzzled me more than a little. But, when on the 'line' grounds we got among a number of cows one calm day, I saw a little fellow about fifteen feet long, apparently only a few days old, in the very act. The mother lay on one side, with the breast nearly at the water's edge; while the calf, lying parallel to

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its parent, with its head in the same direction, held the teat sideways in the angle of its jaw, with its snout protruding from the surface. Although we caught several cow-humpbacks with newly born calves, I never had an opportunity of seeing *them* suck.

Gradually our pleasant days at Vau Vau drew to a close. So quiet and idyllic had the life been, so full of simple joys, that most of us, if not all, felt a pang at the thought of our imminent departure from the beautiful place. Profitable, in a pecuniary sense, the season had certainly failed to be, but that was the merest trifle compared with the real happiness and peace enjoyed during our stay. Even the terrible tragedy which had taken one of our fellows from us could not spoil the actual enjoyment of our visit, sad and touching as the event undoubtedly was. There was always, too, a sufficiently arduous routine of necessary duties to perform, preventing us from degenerating into mere lotus eaters in that delicious afternoon-land. Nor even to me, friendless nomad as I was, did the thought ever occur, 'I will return no more.'

But those lovely days spent in softly gliding over the calm, azure depths, bathed in golden sunlight, gazing dreamily down at the indescribable beauties of the living reefs, feasting daintily on abundance of never-cloying fruit, amid scenes of delight hardly to be imagined by the cramped mind of the town dweller; islands, air, and sea all shimmering in an enchanted haze, and silence scarcely broken by the tender ripple of the gently-parted waters before the boat's steady keel—though these joys have all been lost to me, and I in 'populous city pent' endure the fading years, I would not barter the memory of them for more than I can say, so sweet it is to me. And, then, our relations with the natives had been so perfectly amicable, so free from anything to regret. Perhaps this simple statement will raise a cynical smile upon the lips of those who know T'ahati, the New Hebrides, and kindred spots with all their savage, bestial orgies of alternate unbridled lust and unnamable cruelty. Let it be so. For my part, I rejoice that I have no tale of weeks of drunkenness, of brutal rape, treacherous murder, and almost unthinkable torture to tell.

For of such is the paradise of the beach-comber, and the hell of the clean man. Not that I have been able to escape it altogether. When I say that I once shipped, unwittingly, as sailing-master of a little white schooner in Noumea, bound to Apia, finding when too late that she was a 'blackbirder'—'labour vessel,' the wise it call—nothing more will be needed to convince the initiated that I have moved in the 'nine circles' of Polynesia.

Some time before the day fixed for our departure, we were busy storing the gifts so liberally showered upon us by our eager friends. Hundreds of bunches of bananas, many thousands of oranges,

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yams, taro, chillies, fowls, and pigs were accumulated, until the ship looked like a huge market-boat. But we could not persuade any of the natives to ship with us to replace those whose contract was now expiring. Samuela and Polly were, after much difficulty, prevailed upon by me to go with us to New Zealand, much to my gratification; but still we were woefully short-handed. At last, seeing that there was no help for it, the skipper decided to run over to Futuna, or Horn Island, where he felt certain of obtaining recruits without any trouble. He did so most unwillingly, as may well be believed, for the newcomers would need much training, while our present Kanaka auxiliaries were the smartest men in the ship.

The slop-chest was largely drawn upon, to the credit of the crew, who wished in some tangible way to show their appreciation of the unremitting kindness shown them by their dusky friends. Not a whisper had been uttered by any native as to desire of remuneration for what he had given. If they expected a return, they certainly exercised great control over themselves in keeping their wishes quiet. But when they received the clothing, all utterly unsuited to their requirements as it was, their beaming faces eloquently proclaimed the reality of their joy. Heavy woollen shirts, thick cloth trousers and jackets, knitted socks; but acceptable beyond all was a pilot-suit—warm enough for the Channel in winter. Happy above all power of expression was he who secured it. With an eared cloth cap and a pair of half boots, to complete his preposterous rig, no Bond Street exquisite could feel more calmly conscious of being a well-dressed man than he. From henceforth he would be the observed of all observers at chapel on Sunday, exciting worldly desires and aspirations among his cooler but coveting fellow-worshippers.

The ladies fared very badly, until the skipper, with a twinkling eye, announced that he had 'dug up' some rolls of 'cloth' (calico), which he was prepared to supply us with at reasonable rates. Being of rather pretty pattern, it went off like hot pies, and as the 'fathoms' of gaudy, flimsy material were distributed to the delighted fainèts, their shrill cries of gratitude were almost deafening.

Inexorable time brought round the morning of our departure. Willing hands lifted our anchor, and hoisted the sails, so that we had nothing to do but look on. A scarcely perceptible breeze, stealing softly over the tree-tops, filled our upper canvas, sparing us the labour of towing her out of the little bay where we had lain so long, and gradually wafted us away from its lovely shores, amid the fast-flowing tears of the great crowd. With multitudinous cries of 'Ofa, al-ofa, papâlang' ringing in our ears ('Good-bye; good-bye, white man'), we rounded the point, and, with increasing

pace, bore away through the outlying islands for the open sea. There was a strong trade blowing, making the old bark caper like a dancing-master, which long unfamiliar motion almost disagreed with some of us, after our long quiet. Under its hastening influence we made such good time that before dinner Vau Vau had faded into nothingness, mingling like the clouds with the soft haze on the horizon, from henceforth only a memory.

We were not a very cheerful crowd that night, most of us being busy with his own reflections. I must confess that I felt far greater sorrow at leaving Vau Vau than ever I did at leaving England; because by the time I was able to secure a berth, I have usually drank pretty deep of the bitter cup of the 'outward bounder,' than whom there is no more forlorn, miserable creature on earth. No one but the much abused boarding-master will have anything to do with him, and that worthy is generally careful to let him know that he is but a hanger-on, a dependant on sufferance for a meal, and that his presence on shore is an outrage. As for the sailors' homes, I have hardly patience to speak of them. I know the sailor is usually a big baby that wants protecting against himself, and that once within the four walls of the institution he is safe; but right there commendation must end. Why are good folks ashore systematically misled into the belief that the sailor is an object of charity, and that it is necessary to subscribe continually and liberally to provide him with food and shelter when ashore? Most of the contributors would be surprised to know that the cost of board and lodging at the 'home' is precisely the same as it is outside, and much higher than a landsman of the same grade can live for in better style. With the exception of the sleeping accommodation, most men prefer the boarding-house, where, if they preserve the same commercial status which is a *sine qua non* at the 'home,' they are treated like gentlemen; but in what follows lies the essential difference, and the reason for this outburst of mine, smothered in silence for years. An 'outward bounder'—that is, a man whose money is exhausted and who is living upon the credit of his prospective advance of pay—is unknown at the 'home.' No matter what the condition of things is in the shipping world; though the man may have fought with energy to get his discharge accepted among the crowd at the 'chain-locker;' though he be footsore and weary with 'looking for a ship,' when his money is done, out into the street he must go, if haply he may find a speculative boarding-master to receive him. This act, although most unlikely in appearance, is often performed; and though the boarding-master, of course, expects to recoup himself out of the man's advance note, it is none the less as merciful as the action of the 'home' authorities is merciless. Of course a man may go to the 'straw house,' or, as

it is grandiloquently termed, the 'destitute seaman's asylum,' where for a season he will be fed on the refuse from the 'home,' and sheltered from the weather. But the ungrateful rascals do not like the 'straw house,' and use very bad language about it.

The galling thing about the whole affair is that the 'sailors' home' figures in certain official publications as a charity, which must be partially supported by outside contributions. It may be a charitable institution, but it certainly is not so to the sailor, who pays fully for everything he receives. The charity is bestowed upon a far different class of people to merchant Jack. Let it be granted that a man is sober and provident, always getting a ship before his money is all gone, he will probably be well content at the home, although very few seamen like to be reminded ashore of their sea routine, as the manner of the home is. If the institution does not pay a handsome dividend, with its clothing shops and refreshment bars, as well as the boarding-house business on such a large scale, only one inference can be fairly drawn—there must be something radically wrong with the management.

After this burst of temper, perhaps I had better get back to the subject in hand. It was, I suppose, in the usual contrary nature of things that, while we were all in this nearly helpless condition, one evening just before sunset, along comes a sperm whale. Now, the commonest prudence would have suggested letting him severely alone, since we were not only short-handed, but several of our crew were completely crippled by large boils; but it would have been an unprecedented thing to do while there was any room left in the hold. Consequently we mustered the halt and the lame, and manned two boats—all we could do—leaving the almost useless cripples to handle the ship. Not to displace the rightful harpooner, I took an oar in one of them, headed by the captain.

At first my hopes were high that we should not succeed in reaching the victim before dark, but I was grievously disappointed in this. Just as the whale was curving himself to sound, we got fairly close, and the harpooner made a 'pitch-pole' dart; that is, he hurled his weapon into the air, where it described a fine curve, and fell point downward on the animal's back just as he was disappearing. He stopped his descent immediately, and turned savagely to see what had struck him so unexpectedly. At that moment the sun went down.

After the first few minutes' 'kick-up,' he settled down for a steady run, but not before the mate got good and fast to him likewise. Away we went at a rare rate into the gathering gloom of the fast-coming night. Now, had it been about the time of full moon or thereabouts, we should doubtless have been able, by the flood of molten light she sends down in those latitudes, to give a good

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account of our enemy ; but alas for us, it was not. The sky overhead was a deep blue-black, with steely sparkles of starlight scattered all over it, only serving to accentuate the darkness. After a short time our whale became totally invisible, except for the phosphoric glare of the water all around him as he steadily ploughed his way along. There was a good breeze blowing, which soon caused us all to be drenched with the spray, rendering the general effect of things cold as well as cheerless. Needless to say, we strove with all our might to get alongside of him, so that an end might be put to so unpleasant a state of affairs ; but in our crippled condition it was not at all easy to do so.

We persevered, however, and at last managed to get near enough for the skipper to hurl a lance into the brightness of which the whale formed the centre. It must have touched him, for he gave a bound forward and disappeared. We suddenly came to a stand-still, but in a moment were whirled round as if on a pivot, and away we went in the opposite direction. He had turned a complete somersault in the water beneath us, giving us a 'grue' as we reflected what would have happened had he then chosen to come bounding to the surface. This manœuvre seemed to please him mightily, for he ran at top speed several minutes, and then repeated it. This time he was nearly successful in doing us some real harm, for it was now so dark that we could hardly see the other boat's form as she towed along parallel to us about three or four lengths away. The two boats swung round in a wide circle, rushing back at each other out of the surrounding darkness as if bent on mutual destruction. Only by the smartest manipulation was a collision avoided, which, as each boat's bows bristled with lances and harpoons, would have been a serious matter for some of us. However, the whale did not have it all his own way, for the skipper, having charged his bomb-gun, patiently laid for him, and fired. It was rather a long shot, but it reached him, as we afterwards ascertained, making an ugly wound in the small near his tail.

Its effect upon him was startling and immediate. He rushed off at so furious a rate dead to windward that for a great while we had all our work cut out to keep her free by baling. The sea had risen a little, and as we leapt from one wave to another the spray flew over us in an almost continuous cloud. Clearly our situation was a parlous one. We could not get near him ; we were becoming dangerously enfeebled, and he appeared to be gaining strength instead of losing it. Besides all this, none of us could have the least idea of how the ship now bore from us, our only comfort being that, by observation of the Cross, we were not making a direct course, but travelling on the circumference of an immense circle. Whatever damage we had done to him so far was evidently quite super-



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ficial, for, accustomed as we were to tremendous displays of vigour, on the part of these creatures, this specimen fairly surprised us.

The time could only be guessed at; but, judging from our feelings, it might have been two or three nights long. Still, to all things an end, so in the midst of our dogged endurance of all this misery we felt the pace give, and took heart of grace immediately. Calling up all our reserves, we hauled up on to him, regardless of pain or weariness. The skipper and mate lost no opportunities of lancing, once they were alongside, but worked like heroes, until a final plunging of the fast-dying leviathan warned us to retreat. Up he went out of the glittering foam into the upper darkness, while we held our breath at the unique sight of a whale breaching at night. But when he fell again, the effect was marvellous. Green columns of water arose on either side of the descending mass as if from the bowels of the deep, while their ghostly glare lit up the encircling gloom with a strange, weird radiance, which, reflected in our anxious faces, made us look like an expedition from the *Flying Dutchman*. A short spell of gradually quieting struggle succeeded as the great beast succumbed, until all was still again, except the strange, low surge made by the waves as they broke over the bank of flesh passively obstructing their free sweep.

While the final touch was being given to our task—i.e. the hole-boring through the tail-fin—all hands lay around in various picturesque attitudes, enjoying a refreshing smoke, care forgetting. While thus pleasantly employed, sudden death, like a bolt from the blue, leapt into our midst in a terrible form. The skipper was labouring hard at his task of cutting the hole for the tow-line, when without warning the great fin swung back as if suddenly released from tremendous tension. Happily for us, the force of the blow was broken by its direction, as it struck the water before reaching the boat's side, but the upper lobe hurled the boat-spade from the captain's hands back into our midst, where it struck the tub oarsman, splitting his head in two halves. The horror of the tragedy, the enveloping darkness, the inexplicable revivifying of the monster, which we could not have doubted to be dead, all combined to stupefy and paralyze us for the time. Not a sound was heard in our boat, though the yells of inquiry from our companion craft arose in increasing volume. It was but a brief accession of energy, only lasting two or three minutes, when the whale collapsed finally. Having recovered from our surprise, we took no further chances with so dangerous an opponent, but bored him as full of holes as a colander.

Mournful and miserable were the remaining hours of our vigil. We sat around poor Miguel's corpse with unutterable feelings, recalling all the tragical events of the voyage, until we reached the

nadir of despondency. With the rosy light of morning came more cheerful feelings, heightened by the close proximity of the ship, from which it is probable we had never been more than ten miles distant during the whole night. She had sighted us with the first light, and made all sail down to us, all hands much relieved at our safety. We were so sorely exhausted that we could hardly climb on board; and how we hoisted the boats I hardly know. The whale was secured by the efforts of the cripples we had left on board, while we wayfarers, after a good meal, were allowed four hours' sound, sweet sleep.

When we returned to our duties, the first thing that awaited us was the burial of the poor body. Very reverently were the last sad offices performed, the flag hoisted half-mast, the bell solemnly tolled. Then we gathered at the gangway while the eternal words of hope and consolation were falteringly read, and with a sudden plunge the long, straight parcel slid off the hatch into the vast tomb ever ready for the dead sailor.

Our dead out of sight, work claimed all our attention and energy, wiping out with its beneficent influence all gloomy musings over the inevitable, and replacing them with the pressing needs of life. The whale was not a large one, but peculiar to look at. Like the specimen that fought so fiercely with us in the Indian Ocean, its jaw was twisted round in a sort of hook, the part that curved being so thickly covered with long barnacles as to give the monster a most eerie look. One of the Portuguese expressed his decided opinion that we had caught Davy Jones himself, and that, in consequence, we should have no more accidents. It was impossible not to sympathize with the conceit, for of all the queer-looking monstrosities ever seen, this latest acquisition of ours would have taken high honours. Such malformations of the lower mandible of the cachalot have often been met with, and variously explained; but the most plausible opinion seems to be that they have been acquired when the animal is very young, and its bones not yet indurated, since it is impossible to believe that an adult could suffer such an accident without the broken jaw drooping instead of being turned on one side.

The yield of oil was distressingly scanty, the whale being what is technically known as a 'dry skin.' The blubber was so hard and tough that we could hardly cut it up for boiling, and altogether it was one of the most disappointing affairs we had yet dealt with. This poorness of blubber was, to my mind, undoubtedly due to the difficulty the animal must have had in obtaining food with his disabling defect of jaw. Whatever it was, we were heartily glad to see the last of the beast, fervently hoping we should never meet with another like him.

## AT FUTUNA, RECRUITING

During the progress of these melancholy operations we had drifted a considerable distance out of our course, no attention being paid, as usual, to the direction of our drift until the greasy work was done. Once the mess was cleared away, we hauled up again for our objective—Futuna—which, as it was but a few hours' sail distant, we hoped to make the next day.

### 23

#### *At Futuna, Recruiting*

SURE enough, in accordance with our expectations, break of day revealed the twin masses of Futuna ahead, some ten or fifteen miles away. With the fine, steady breeze blowing, by breakfast-time we were off the entrance to a pretty bight, where sail was shortened and the ship hove-to. Captain Count did not intend to anchor, for reasons of his own, he being assured that there was no need to do so. Nor was there. Although the distance from the beach was considerable, we could see numbers of canoes putting off, and soon they began to arrive. Now, some of the South Sea Islands are famous for the elegance and seaworthiness of their canoes; nearly all of them have a distinctly definite style of canoe-building; but here at Futuna was a bewildering collection of almost every type of canoe in the wide world. Dugouts, with outriggers on one side, on both sides, with none at all; canoes built like boats, like prams, like irregular egg-boxes, many looking like the first boyish attempt to knock something together that would float; and—not to unduly prolong the list by attempted classification of these unclassed craft—*coracles*. Yes; in that lonely Pacific island, among that motley crowd of floating nondescripts, were specimens of the ancient coracle of our own islands, constructed in exactly the same way; that is, of wicker-work, covered with some waterproof substance, whether skin or tarpaulin. But the ingenious Kanaka, not content with his coracles, had gone one better, and copied them in dugouts of solid timber. The resultant vessel was a sort of cross between a butcher's tray and a wash-basin—

*'A thing beyond*

*Conception: such a wretched wherry,  
Perhaps ne'er ventured on a pond,  
Or crossed a ferry.'*

The proud possessors of the coracles, both wicker and wood, must have been poor indeed, for they did not even own a paddle, propelling their basins through the water with their hands. It may be

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

imagined what a pace they put on! At a little distance they were very puzzling, looking more like a water-beetle grown fat and lazy than aught else.

And so, in everything floatable, the whole male population of that part of the coast came to visit us. We were speedily the centre of a great crowd of canoes, some of which were continually capsizing and spilling their occupants, who took no more notice of such incidents than one would of a sneeze. Underneath a canoe, or on top, made but little difference to these amphibious creatures. They brought nothing with them to trade; in fact, few of their vessels were capable of carrying anything that could not swim and take care of itself. As they came on board, each crossed himself more or less devoutly, revealing the teaching of a Roman Catholic mission; and as they called to one another, it was not hard to recognize, even in their native garb, such names as Errènèò (Irenæus), Al'seo (Aloysius), and other favourite cognomens of saints.

A laughing, chattering, good-tempered crowd they were—just like a bevy of children breaking up, and apparently destitute of the slightest sense of responsibility. They spoke a totally different dialect, or maybe language, to that of Vau Vau, for it was only an isolated word here and there that Samuela could make out. But presently, going forward through the crowd that thronged every part of the deck, I saw a man leaning nonchalantly against the rail by the fore-rigging, who struck me at once as being an American negro. The most casual observer would not have mistaken him for a Kanaka of those latitudes, though he might have passed as a Papuan. He was dressed in all the dignity of a woollen shirt, with a piece of fine 'tapa' for a waistcloth, feet and legs bare. Around his neck was a necklace composed of a number of strings of blue and white beads plaited up neatly, and carrying as a pendant a George 'shilling. Going up to him, I looked at the coin, and said, 'Belitani money?' 'Oh yes,' he said, 'that's a shilling of old George Fourf,' in perfectly good English, but with an accent which quite confirmed my first idea. I at once invited him aft to see the skipper, who was very anxious to find an interpreter among the noisy crowd, besides being somewhat uneasy at having so large a number on board.

To the captain's interrogations he replied that he was 'Tui Tongoa'—that is, King of Tongoa, an island a little distance away—but that he was at present under a cloud, owing to the success of a usurper, whom he would reckon with by-and-by.

In the mean time he would have no objection to engaging himself with us as a harpooner, and would get us as many men as we wanted, selecting from among the crowd on board, fellows that would, he knew, be useful to us.

## AT FUTUNA, RECRUITING

A bargain was soon struck, and Tui entered upon his self-imposed task. It was immediately evident that he had a bigger contract on hand than he had imagined. The natives, who had previously held somewhat aloof from him in a kind of deferential respect, no sooner got wind of the fact that we needed some of them than they were seized with a perfect frenzy of excitement. There were, I should think, at least a hundred and fifty of them on board at the time. Of this crowd, every member wanted to be selected, pushing his candidature with voice and gesture as vigorously as he knew how. The din was frightful. Tui, centre of the frantic mob, strove vainly to make himself heard, to reduce the chaos to some sort of order, but for a great while it was a hopeless attempt. At last, extricating himself from his importunate friends, he gained the captain's side. Panting, almost breathless, with sweat streaming off him, he gasped out, 'Oh, cap'n, dese yer darn niggers all gone mad! Dribe 'em oberbord; clar 'em out, 'n I'll stan' by to grab some o' der likely ones as de res' scatter.' 'But what about the wages?' said the skipper. 'I'm not goin' ter give 'em whatever they like to ask.' 'You leab it ter me, cap'n. I bet you'll be satisfy. Anyhow, dishyers no time fer tradin'; de blame niggers all off dere coco-nuts. Anybody fink you'se payin' off 'stead o' shippin', an' deyse all afraid dey won't get 'nough.'

Unpleasant as the job was to all of us, it had to be done; so we armed ourselves with ropes'-ends, which we flourished threateningly, avoiding where possible any actual blows. Many sprang overboard at once, finding their way ashore or to their canoes as best they could. The majority, however, had to swim, for we now noticed that, either in haste or from carelessness, they had in most cases omitted to fasten their canoes securely when coming alongside, so that many of them were now far out to sea. The distance to shore being under three miles, that mattered little, as far as their personal safety was concerned.

This summary treatment was eminently successful, quiet being rapidly restored, so that Tui was able to select a dozen men, who he declared were the best in the islands for our purpose. Although it seems somewhat premature to say so, the general conduct of the successful candidates was so good as to justify Tui fully in his eulogium. Perhaps his presence had something to do with it?

We now had all that we came for, so that we were anxious to be off. But it was a job to get rid of the visitors still remaining on board. They stowed themselves away in all manner of corners, in some cases ludicrously inadequate as hiding-places, and it was not until we were nearly five miles from the land that the last of them plunged into the sea and struck out for home. It was very queer. Ignorant of our destination, of what would be required of them;

leaving a land of ease and plenty for a certainty of short commons and hard work, without preparation or farewells, I do not think I ever heard of such a strange thing before. Had their home been famine or plague-stricken, they could not have evinced greater eagerness to leave it, or to face the great unknown.

As we drew farther off the island the wind freshened, until we had a good, whole-sail breeze blustering behind us, the old ship making, with her usual generous fuss, a tremendous rate of seven knots an hour. Our course was shaped for the southward, towards the Bay of Islands, New Zealand. In that favourite haunt of the South-seaman we were to wood and water, find letters from home (those who had one), and prepare for the stormy south.

Obviously the first thing to be done for our new shipmates was to clothe them. When they arrived on board, all, with the single exception of Tui, were furnished only with a 'maro' of 'tapa,' scanty in its proportions, but still enough to wrap round their loins. But when they were accepted for the vacant positions on board, they cast off even the slight apology for clothing which they had worn, flinging the poor rags to their retreating and rejected compatriots. Thus they were strutting about, in native majesty unclad, which, of course, could not be endured among even so unconventional a crowd as we were. So they were mustered aft, and, to their extravagant delight, a complete rig-out was handed to each of them, accompanied by graphic instructions how to dress themselves. Very queer they looked when dressed, but queerer still not long afterwards, when some of them, galled by the unaccustomed restraint of the trousers, were seen prowling about with shirts tied round their waists by the sleeves, and pants twisted turban-wise about their heads. Tui was called, and requested to inform them that they must dress properly, after the fashion of the white man, for that any impromptu improvements upon our method of clothes-wearing could not be permitted. As they were gentle, tractable fellows, they readily obeyed, and, though they must have suffered considerably, there were no further grounds for complaint on the score of dress.

It has been already noticed that they were Roman Catholics—all except Tui, who from his superior mental elevation looked down upon their beliefs with calm contempt, although really a greater heathen than any of them had ever been. It was quite pathetic to see how earnestly they endeavoured to maintain the form of worship to which they had been accustomed, though how they managed without their priest, I could not find out. Every evening they had prayers together, accompanied by many crossings and genuflexions, and wound up by the singing of a hymn in such queer Latin that it was almost unrecognizable. After much wonder-

ing, I did manage to make out 'O Salutaris Hostia!' and 'Tantum, Ergo,' but not until their queer pronunciation of consonants had become familiar. Some of the hymns were in their own tongue, only one of which I can now remember. Phonetically, it ran thus—

‘Mah-lee-ah, Kollyeea leekæ;  
 Ohselloh mo mallamah.  
 Alofah, keea ma toh;  
 Fah na oh, Mah lah ee ah’—

which I understood to be a native rendering of 'O Stella Maris!' It was sung to the well-known 'Processional' in good time, and on that account, I suppose, fixed itself in my memory.

Whenever any of them were ordered aloft, they never failed to cross themselves before taking to the rigging, as if impressed with a sense of their chance of not returning again in safety. To me was given the congenial task of teaching them the duties required, and I am bound to admit that they were willing, biddable, and cheerful learners. Another amiable trait in their characters was especially noticeable: they always held everything in common. No matter how small the portion received by any one, it was scrupulously shared with the others who lacked, and this subdivision was often carried to ludicrous lengths.

As there was no reason to hurry south, we took a short cruise on the Vasquez ground, more, I think, for the purpose of training our recruits than anything else. As far as the results to our profit were concerned, we might almost as well have gone straight on, for we only took one small cow-cachalot. But the time spent thus cruising was by no means wasted. Before we left finally for New Zealand, every one of those Kanakas was as much at home in the whale-boats as he would have been in a canoe. Of course they were greatly helped by their entire familiarity with the water, which took from them all that dread of being drowned which hampers the white 'greenie' so sorely, besides which, the absolute confidence they had in our prowess amongst the whales freed them from any fear on that head.

Tui proved himself to be a smart harpooner, and was chosen for the captain's boat. During our conversations, I was secretly amused to hear him allude to himself as Sam, thinking how little it accorded with his *soi-disant* Kanaka origin. He often regaled me with accounts of his royal struggles to maintain his rule, all of which narrations I received with a goodly amount of reserve, though confirmed in some particulars by the Kanakas, when I became able to converse with them. But I was hardly prepared to find, as I did many years after, upon looking up some detail in Findlay's 'South Pacific Directory,' this worthy alluded to as 'the celebrated Sam,' in a brief account of Futuna. There he was said

to be king of the twin isles; so I suppose he found means to oust his rival, and resume his sovereignty; though, how an American negro, as Sam undoubtedly was, ever managed to gain such a position, remains to me an unfathomable mystery. Certainly he did not reveal any such masterful attributes as one would have expected in him, while he served as harpooner on board the *Cachalot*.

Gradually we crept south, until one morning we sighted the towering mass of Sunday Island, the principal member of the small Kermadec group, which lies nearly on the prime meridian of one hundred and eighty degrees, and but a short distance north of the extremity of New Zealand. We had long ago finished the last of our fresh provisions, fish had been very scarce, so the captain seized the opportunity to give us a run ashore, and at the same time instructed us to do such foraging as we could. It was rumoured that there were many wild pigs to be found, and certainly abundance of goats; but if both these sources of supply failed, we could fall back on fish, of which we were almost sure to get a good haul.

The island is a stupendous mass of rock, rising sheer from the waves, in some places to a height of fifteen hundred feet. These towering cliffs are clothed with verdure, large trees clinging to their precipitous sides in a marvellous way. Except at one small bight, known as Denham Bay, the place is inaccessible, not only from the steepness of its cliffs, but because, owing to its position, the gigantic swell of the South Pacific assails those immense bastions with a force and volume that would destroy instantly any vessel that unfortunately ventured too near. Denham Bay, however, is in some measure protected by reefs of scattered boulders, which break the greatest volume of the oncoming rollers. Within those protecting barriers, with certain winds, it is possible to effect a landing with caution; but even then no tyro in boat-handling should venture to do so, as the experiment would almost certainly be fatal to boat and crew.

We hove-to off the little bay, the waters of which looked placid enough for a pleasure-party, lowered two boats well furnished with fishing gear and such other equipment as we thought would be needed, and pulled away for the landing-place. As we drew near the beach, we found that, in spite of the hindrance to the ocean swell afforded by the reefs, it broke upon the beach in rollers of immense size. In order to avoid any mishap, then, we turned the boats' heads to seaward, and gently backed towards the beach, until a larger breaker than usual came thundering in. As it rushed towards us, we pulled lustily to meet it, the lovely craft rising to its foaming crest like sea-birds. Then, as soon as we were on its



outer slope, we reversed the stroke again, coming in on its mighty shoulders at racing speed. The instant our keels touched the beach we all leapt out, and exerting every ounce of strength we possessed, ran the boats up high and dry before the next roller had time to do more than hiss harmlessly around our feet. It was a task of uncommon difficulty, for the shore was wholly composed of loose lava and pumice-stone grit, into which we sank ankle-deep at every step, besides being exceedingly steep.

We managed, however, to escape without any mishap, for the drenching was a boon to our burnt-up skins. Off we started along the level land, which, as far as I could judge, extended inland for perhaps a mile and a half by about two miles wide. From this flat shelf the cliffs rose perpendicularly, as they did from the sea. Up their sides were innumerable goat-tracks, upon some of which we could descry a few of those agile creatures climbing almost like flies. The plateau was thickly wooded, many of the trees having been fruit-bearing once, but now, much to our disappointment, barren from neglect.

A ruined house, surrounded by other vestiges of what had once been a homestead, stood in the middle of this piece of land. Feeling curious to know what the history of this isolated settlement might be, I asked the mate if he knew anything of it. He told me that an American named Halstead, with his family, lived here for years, visited only by an occasional whaler, to whom they sold such produce as they might have and be able to spare at the time. What their previous history had been, or why they thus chose to cut themselves off from the world, he did not know; but they seemed contented enough with their tiny kingdom, nor had any wish to leave it. But it came to pass that one night they felt the sure and firm-set earth trembling convulsively beneath their feet. Rushing out of their house, they saw the heavens bespread with an awful pall of smoke, the under-side of which was glowing with the reflected fires of some vast furnace. Their terror was increased by a smart shower of falling ashes and the reverberations of subterranean thunders. At first they thought of flight in their boat, not reckoning the wide stretch of sea which rolled between them and the nearest land, but the height and frequency of the breakers then prevailing made that impossible.

Their situation was pitiable in the extreme. During the years of peace and serenity they had spent here, no thought of the insecurity of their tenure had troubled them. Though they had but been dwellers on the threshold of the mountain, as it were, and any extension of their territory impossible by reason of the insurmountable barrier around them, they had led an untroubled life, all unknowing of the fearful forces beneath their feet. But now they

found the foundations of the rocks beneath breaking up; that withering, incessant shower of ashes and scoriæ destroyed all their crops; the mild and delicate air changed into a heavy, sulphurous miasma; while overhead the beneficent face of the bright-blue sky had become a horrible canopy of deadly black, about which played lurid coruscations of infernal fires.

What they endured throughout those days and nights of woe, could never be told. They fled from the home they had reared with such abundance of loving labour, taking refuge in a cave; for not even the knowledge that the mountain itself seemed to be in the throes of dissolution could entirely destroy their trust in those apparently eternal fastnesses. Here their eldest son died, worried to death by incessant terror. At last a passing whaler, remembering them and seeing the condition of things, had the humanity and courage to stand in near enough to see their agonized signals of distress. All of them, except the son buried but a day or two before, were safely received and carried away, leaving the terrible mountain to its solitude.

As I listened, I almost involuntarily cast my eyes upwards; nor was I at all surprised to see far overhead a solitary patch of smoky cloud, which I believe to have been a sure indication that the volcano was still liable to commence operations at any time.

So far, we had not happened upon any pigs, or goats either, although we saw many indications of the latter odoriferous animal. There were few sea-birds to be seen, but in and out among the dense undergrowth ran many short-legged brown birds, something like a partridge—the same, I believe, as we afterwards became familiar with in Stewart's Island by the name of 'Maori hens.' They were so tame and inquisitive that we had no difficulty in securing a few by the simple process of knocking them over with sticks. From the main branch of a large tree hung a big honey-comb, out of which the honey was draining upon the earth. Around it buzzed a busy concourse of bees, who appeared to us so formidable that we decided to leave them to the enjoyment of their sweet store, in case we should invite an attack.

So far, our rambling had revealed nothing of any service to us; but just then, struck by the appearance of a plant which was growing profusely in a glade we were passing over, I made bold to taste one of the leaves. What the botanical name of the vegetable is, I do not know; but, under the designation of 'Maori cabbage,' it is well known in New Zealand. It looks like a lettuce, running to seed; but it tastes exactly like young turnip-tops, and is a splendid anti-scorbutic. What its discovery meant to us, I can hardly convey to any one who does not know what an insatiable craving for potatoes and green vegetables possesses seamen when

they have for long been deprived of these humble but necessary articles of food. Under the circumstances, no 'find' could have given us greater pleasure—that is, in the food line—than this did.

Taking it all round, however, the place as a foraging ground was not a success. We chased a goat of very large size, and beard voluminous as a Rabbi's, into a cave, which may have been the one the Halsteads took shelter in, for we saw no other. One of the Kanakas volunteered to go in after him with a line, and did so. The resultant encounter was the best bit of fun we had had for many a day. After a period of darksome scuffling within, the entangled pair emerged, fiercely wrestling, Billy being to all appearance much the fresher of the two. Fair play seemed to demand that we should let them fight it out; but, sad to say, the other Kanakas could not see things in that light, and Billy was soon despatched. Rather needless killing, too; for no one, except at starvation-point, could have eaten the poor remains of leathery flesh that still decorated that weather-beaten frame.

But this sort of thing was tiring and unprofitable. The interest of the place soon fizzled out, when it was found there was so little worth taking away; so, as the day was getting on, it was decided to launch off and start fishing. In a few minutes we were afloat again, and anchored, in about four fathoms, in as favourable a spot for our sport as ever I saw. Fish swarmed about us of many sorts, but principally of the 'kauwhai,' a kind of mullet very plentiful about Auckland, and averaging five or six pounds. Much to my annoyance, we had not been able to get any bait, except a bit of raw salt-pork, which hardly any fish but the shark tribe will look at. Had I known or thought of it, a bit of goat would have been far more attractive.

However, as there was no help for it, we baited up and started. 'Nary nibble ermong 'em!' growled Sam, as we sat impatiently waiting for a bite. When we hauled up to see what was wrong, fish followed the hook up in hundreds, letting us know plainly as possible that they only wanted something tasty. It was outrageous, exasperating beyond measure! At last Samuela grew so tired of it that he seized his harpoon, and hurled it into the middle of a company of kauwhai that were calmly nosing around the bows. By the merest chance he managed to impale one of them upon the broad point. It was hardly in the boat before I had seized it, scaled it, and cut it into neat little blocks. All hands rebaited with it, and flung out again. The change was astounding. Up they came, two at a time, dozens and dozens of them—kauwhai, cavallè, yellow-tail, schnapper—lovely fish of delicious flavour and goodly size. Then one of us got a fish which made him yell, 'Shark! shark!' with all his might. He had a small line of American cotton, staunch

as copper wire, but dreadfully cutting to the hands. When he took a turn round the loggerhead, the friction of the running line cut right into the white oak, but the wonderful cord and hook still held their own. At last the monster yielded, coming in at first inch by inch, then more rapidly, till raised in triumph above the gunwale—a yellow-tail six feet long. I have caught this splendid fish (*Elagatis bipinnulatus*) many times before and since then, but never did I see such a grand specimen as this one—no, not by thirty or forty pounds. Then I got a giant cavallè. His broad, shield-like body blazed hither and thither as I struggled to ship him, but it was long ere he gave in to superior strength and excellence of line and hook.

Meanwhile, the others had been steadily increasing our cargo, until, feeling that we had quite as much fish as would suffice us, besides being really a good load, I suggested a move towards the ship. We were laying within about half a mile of the shore, where the extremity of the level land reached the cliffs. Up one of the well-worn tracks a fine, fat goat was slowly creeping, stopping every now and then to browse upon the short herbage that clung to the crevices of the rock. Without saying a word, Polly the Kanaka slipped over the side, and struck out with overhead strokes for the foot of the cliff. As soon as I saw what he was after, I shouted loudly for him to return, but he either could not or would not hear me. The fellow's seal-like ability as a swimmer was, of course, well known to me, but I must confess I trembled for his life in such a weltering whirl of rock-torn sea as boiled among the crags at the base of that precipice. He, however, evidently knew what he was going to do, and, though taking risks which would have certainly been fatal to an ordinary swimmer, was quite unafraid of the result.

We all watched him breathlessly as he apparently headed straight for the biggest outlying rock—a square, black boulder about the size of an ordinary railway car. He came up to it on the summit of a foaming wave; but just as I looked for him to be dashed to pieces against its adamantine sides, he threw his legs into the air and disappeared. A stealthy, satisfied smile glowed upon Samuela's rugged visage, and, as he caught my eye, he said jauntily, 'Polly savee too much. Lookie him come ontow one time!' I looked, and sure enough there was the daring villain crawling up among the kelp far out of reach of the hungry rollers. It was a marvellous exhibition of coolness and skill.

Without waiting an instant, he began to stalk the goat, dodging amongst the bushes with feet that clung to the steep sides of the cliff as well as the animal's. Before he could reach her, she had winded him, and was off up the track. He followed, without further

attempt to hide himself; but, despite his vigour and ability, would, I fancy, have stood a microscopic chance of catching her had she not been heavy with kid. As it was, he had all his work cut out for him. When he did catch her, she made so fierce a struggle for life and liberty that, in the endeavour to hold her, he missed his insecure foothold, and the pair came tumbling over and over down the cliff in a miniature avalanche of stones and dust. At the bottom they both lay quiet for a time; while I anxiously waited, fearing the rash fool was seriously injured; but in a minute or two he was on his feet again.

Lashing the goat to his body, and ignoring her struggles, he crawled out as far among the rocks as he could; then, at the approach of a big breaker, he dived to meet it, coming up outside its threatening top like a life-buoy. I pulled in, as near as I could venture, to pick him up, and in a few minutes had him safely on board again, but suffering fearfully. In his roll down the cliff he had been without his trousers, which would have been some protection to him. Consequently, his thighs were deeply cut and torn in many places, while the brine entering so many wounds, though a grand styptic, must have tortured him unspeakably. At any rate, though he was a regular stoic to bear pain, he fainted while I was 'dressing him down' in the most vigorous language I could command for his foolhardy trick. Then we all realized what he must be going through, and felt that he was getting all the punishment he deserved, and more. The goat, poor thing! seemed none the worse for her rough handling.

The mate gave the signal to get back on board just as Polly revived, so there were no inconvenient questions asked, and we returned alongside in triumph, with such a cargo of fish as would have given us a good month's pay all round could we have landed them at Billingsgate. Although the mate had not succeeded as well as we, the catch of the two boats aggregated half a ton, not a fish among the lot less than five pounds weight, and one of a hundred and twenty—the yellow-tail aforesaid. As soon as we reached the ship, the boats were run up, sails filled, and away we lumbered again towards New Zealand.

As the great mass of that solitary mountain faded away in the gathering shades of evening, it was impossible to help remembering the sufferings of that afflicted family, confined to those trembling, sulphurous, ash-bestrewn rocks, amid gloom by day, and unnatural glare by night, for all that weary while. And while I admit that there is to some people a charm in being alone with nature, it is altogether another thing when your solitude becomes compulsory, your paradise a prison from which you cannot break away. There are many such nooks scattered about the ocean, where men have

hidden themselves away from the busy world, and been forgotten by it; but few of them, I fancy, offer such potentialities of terror as Sunday Island.

We had hardly lost sight of the land, when Polly's capture gave birth to a kid. This event was the most interesting thing that had happened on board for a great while, and the funny little visitor would have run great risk of being completely spoiled had he lived. But, to our universal sorrow, the mother's milk failed—from want of green food, I suppose—and we were obliged to kill the poor little chap to save him from being starved to death. He made a savoury mess for some whose appetite for flesh-meat was stronger than any sentimental considerations.

To an ordinary trader, the distance between the Kermadecs and the Bay of Islands, New Zealand, roughly represents a couple of days' sail; but to us, who were apparently incapable of hurry under any circumstances, it meant a good week's bludgeoning the protesting waves before the grim outliers of the Three Kings came into view. Even then, although the distance was a mere bagatelle, it was another two days before we arrived off that magnificent harbour where reposes the oldest township in New Zealand—Russell, where rest the mortal remains of the first really Pakeha Maori, but which, for some unaccountable reason, is still left undeveloped and neglected, visited only by the wandering whalers (in ever-decreasing numbers) and an occasional trim, business-like, and gentlemanly man-o'-war, that, like a Guardsman strolling the West End in mufti, stalks the sea with never an item of her smart rig deviating by a shade from its proper set or sheer.

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### *The Bay of Islands and New Zealand Coast*

IN a comparative new colony like New Zealand, where the marvellous growth of the young state can be traced within living memory, from the privations of the pioneer to the fully developed city with all the machinery of our latest luxurious civilization, it is exceedingly interesting to note how the principal towns have sprung up arbitrarily, and without any heed to the intentions of the ruling powers. The old-fashioned township of Kororarika, or Port Russell, is a case very much in point. As we sailed in between the many islets from which the magnificent bay takes its name, for all appearances to the contrary, we might have been the first discoverers. Not a house, not a sail, not a boat, broke the loneliness and primeval look of the placid waters and the adjacent shores. Not until we drew near the anchorage, and saw upon opening up the little

town the straight-standing masts of three whale-ships, did anything appear to dispel the intense air of solitude overhanging the whole. As we drew nearer, and rounded-to for mooring, I looked expectantly for some sign of enterprise on the part of the inhabitants—some tradesman's boat soliciting orders; some of the population on the beach (there was no sign of a pier), watching the visitor come to an anchor. Not a bit of it. The whole place seemed a maritime sleepy hollow, the dwellers in which had lost all interest in life, and had become far less energetic than the much-maligned Kanakas in their dreamy isles of summer.

Yet this was once intended for the capital of New Zealand. When the large and splendidly-built city of Dunedin, Otago, was a barren bush, haunted only by the 'morepork' and the apteryx, Russell was humming with vitality, her harbour busy with fleets of ships, principally whalers, who found it the most convenient calling-place in the southern temperate zone. Terrible scenes were enacted about its 'blackguard beach,' orgies of wild debauchery and bloodshed indulged in by the half-savage and utterly lawless crews of the whale-ships. But it never attained to any real importance. As a port of call for whalers, it enjoyed a certain kind of prosperity; but when the South Sea fishery dwindled, Russell shrank in immediate sympathy. It never had any vitality of its own, no manufactures or products, unless the wretched coal-mines adjacent, with their dirty output, which is scoffed at by the grimmest tug afloat, could be dignified by the name.

Remembering, as I did, the beauty, the energy, and prosperity of the great New Zealand ports, some of them with not a tithe of the natural advantages of Russell, I felt amazed, almost indignant, at its dead-and-alive appearance.

Our anchor was no sooner down than the captains of the *James Arnold*, *Matilda Sayer*, and *Coral* lowered and came on board, eager to hear or to tell such news as was going. As we had now grown to expect, all work was over immediately the sails were fast and decks cleared up, so that we were free to entertain our visitors. And a high old time we had of it that afternoon! What with songs, dances, and yarns, the hours flew by with lightning speed. Our Kanakas, too, were overjoyed to find compatriots among the visitors, and settled down to a steady stream of talk which lasted, without intermission, the whole night through. It was a wonderful exhibition of tongue-wagging, though what it was all about puzzled me greatly.

Life on board those three ships, though described in glowing terms by the visitors, was evidently not to be mentioned for comfort in the same breath as ours. But we found that our late captain's fame as a 'hard citizen' was well known to all; so that it is only

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ordinary justice to suppose that such a life as he led us was exceptional for even a Yankee spouter. Our friends gave us a blood-curdling account of the Solander whaling ground, which we were about to visit, the *James Arnold* and *Coral* having spent a season there that cruise. I did not, however, pay much attention to their yarns, feeling sure that, even if they were fact, it would not help to brood over coming hardships, and inclined to give liberal discount to most of their statements. The incessant chatter got wearisome at last, and I, for one, was not sorry when, at two in the morning, our visitors departed to their several ships, and left us to get what sleep still remained left to us.

A pleasant expedition was planned for the next day. Our visit being principally for wooding and watering, both of which it was necessary for us to do ourselves, Captain Count showed his usual promptitude in commencing at once. Permission having been obtained and, I suppose, paid for, we set out with two boats and a plentiful supply of axes for a well-wooded promontory to prepare a store of wood. Wood chopping is not usually looked upon as a sailor's pastime; but we had had considerable experience during the voyage, as a result of which most of us could swing an axe in fine style. But the Kanakas beat us all hollow. Delighted to get ashore again, pleased with the fine axes as children with new toys, they laid about them in grand style, the young trees falling right and left in scores. Anybody would have judged that we were working piece-work, at so much a cord, the pile grew so fast. There was such a quantity collected that, instead of lightening it off in the boats, which is very rough and dirty usage for them, I constructed a sort of raft with four large spars arranged in the form of an oblong, placing an immense quantity of the smaller stuff in between. Upright sticks were rudely lashed here and there, to keep the pile from bobbing out underneath, and thus loaded we proceeded slowly to the ship with sufficient wood for our wants brought in one journey. It was immediately hoisted on board, sawn into convenient lengths, and stowed away, the whole operation being completed of getting between eight and ten tons of firewood cut, ferried, and stowed, in less than eight hours.

Next day was devoted to watering; but as I have elsewhere described that necessary if prosaic occupation, I will not repeat the story. Sufficient to say that the job was successfully 'did' in the course of the day.

All the work being accomplished for which we had come, it only remained to give the crew 'liberty.' So the port watch, in their best (?) rig, were mustered aft; each man received ten shillings, and away they went in glee for the first genuine day's liberty since leaving Honolulu. For although they had been much ashore in



Vau Vau, that was not looked upon in the same light as a day's freedom in a town where liquor might be procured, and the questionable privilege of getting drunk taken advantage of. Envious eyes watched their progress from the other ships, but, much to my secret satisfaction, none of their crews were allowed ashore at the same time. There were quite sufficient possibilities of a row among our own crowd, without further complications such as would almost certainly have occurred had the strangers been let loose at the same time. Unfortunately, to the ordinary sailor-man, the place presented no other forms of amusement besides drinking, and I was grieved to see almost the whole crowd, including the Kanakas, emerge from the grog-shop plentifully supplied with bottles, and, seating themselves on the beach, commence their carouse. The natives evinced the greatest eagerness to get drunk, swallowing down the horrible 'square gin' as if it were water. They passed with the utmost rapidity through all the stages of drunkenness. Before they had been ashore an hour, most of them were lying like logs, in the full blaze of the sun, on the beach. Seeing this, the captain suggested the advisability of bringing them on board at once, as they were only exposed to robbery by the few prowling Maories that loafed about the beach— a curious contrast to the stately fellows met with in other parts of New Zealand.

So we set to work, and brought them on board again, handing them over to their compatriots by way of warning against similar excesses, although, it must be confessed, that they were hardly to blame, with the example of their more civilized shipmates before their eyes. Sam was energetic in his condemnation of both the Kanakas for getting drunk, and the captain for giving them any money wherewith to do so. The remainder of the watch fortunately concluded their carouse without any serious disorder. A few bruises bestowed upon one another, more in clumsy horseplay than real fighting, summed up the casualties among them. By ten o'clock that evening we had them all safely on board again, ready for sore heads and repentance in the morning.

During the day I had evolved a scheme, which I had great hopes of carrying out when our watch should be let loose on the morrow. When morning came, and the liberty men received their money, I called them together and unfolded my plan. Briefly, I proposed a sort of picnic at a beautiful spot discovered during our wooding expedition. I was surprised and very pleased at the eager way in which all, with the sole exceptions of Tui and his fellow-harpooner, a Portuguese, fell in with my suggestions. Without any solicitation on my part, my Kanakas brought me their money, begging me to expend it for them, as they did not know how, and did not want to buy gin.

Under such favourable auspices as these, we landed shortly after eight a.m., making a bee-line for the only provision shop the place boasted. Here we laid in a stock of such savouries as we had long been strangers to, both eatables and drinkables, although I vetoed fire-water altogether. Beer in bottle was substituted, at my suggestion, as being, if we must have drinks of that nature, much the least harmful to men in a hot country, besides, in the quantity that we were able to take, non-intoxicant. We also took tea, sugar, milk, and a kettle. Thus furnished, we struck for the country, merry as a group of schoolboys, making the quiet air ring again with song, shout, and laughter—all of which may seem puerile and trivial in the extreme; but having seen liberty men ashore in nearly every big port in the world, watched the helpless, dazed look with which they wander about, swinging hands, bent shoulders, and purposeless rolling gait, I have often fervently wished that some one would take a party of them for a ramble with a definite purpose, helping them to a little enjoyment, instead of them falling, from sheer lack of knowing what else to do, into some dirty, darksome gin-mill, to be besotted, befooled, and debased.

I do earnestly wish that some of the good folk in London and Liverpool, who are wringing their hands for want of something to do among their fellow-men, would pay a visit to sailor-town for the purpose of getting up a personally-conducted party of sailors to see the sights worth seeing. It is a cheap form of pleasure, even if they paid all expenses, though that would not be likely. They would have an uphill job at first, for the sailor has been so long accustomed to being preyed upon by the class he knows, and neglected by everybody else except the few good people who want to preach to him, that he would probably, in a sheepish shame-faced sort of way, refuse to have any 'truck' with you, as he calls it. If the 'sailors' home' people were worth their salt, they would organize expeditions by carriage to such beautiful places as—in London, for instance—Hampton Court, Zoological Gardens, Crystal Palace, Epping Forest, and the like, with competent guides and good catering arrangements. But no; the sailor is allowed to step outside the door of the 'home' into the grimy, dismal streets with nothing open to him but the dance-house and brothel on one side, and the mission hall or reading-room on the other. God forbid that I should even appear to sneer at missions to seamen; nothing is farther from my intention; but I do feel that sailors need a little healthy human interest to be taken in providing some pleasure for them, and that there are unorthodox ways of 'missioning' which are well worth a trial.

I once took a party (while I was an A.B.) from Wells-street Home to the South Kensington Museum. There were six of them

—a Frenchman, a Dane, a Russian Finn, two Englishmen, and an Irishman. Though continually sailing from London for years, this was the first occasion they had ever been west of Aldgate. The only mistake I made was in going too deep at one step. The journey from Shadwell to South Kensington, under the guidance of one familiar, through the hardest personal experiences, with every corner of the vast network, was quite enough for one day. So that by the time we entered the Museum they were surfeited temporarily with sight-seeing, and not able to take in the wonders of the mighty place. Seeing this, I did not persist, but, after some rest and refreshment, led them across the road among the naval models. Ah! it was a rare treat to see them there. For if there is one thing more than another which interests a sailor, it is a well-made model of a ship. Sailors are model-makers almost by nature, turning out with the most meagre outfit of tools some wonderfully-finished replicas of the vessels in which they have sailed. And the collection of naval models at South Kensington is, I suppose, unsurpassed in the world for the number and finish of the miniature vessels there shown.

Our day was a great success, never to be forgotten by those poor fellows, whose only recreation previously had been to stroll listlessly up and down the gloomy, stone-flagged hall of the great barracks until sheer weariness drove them out into the turbid current of the 'Highway,' there to seek speedily some of the dirty haunts where the 'runner' and the prostitute awaited them.

But I have wandered far from the Bay of Islands while thus chattering of the difficulties that beset the path of rational enjoyment for the sailor ashore. Returning to that happy day, I remember vividly how, just after we got clear of the town, we were turning down a lane between hedgerows wonderfully like one of our own country roads, when something—I could not tell what—gripped my heart and sent a lump into my throat. Tears sprang unbidden to my eyes, and I trembled from head to foot with emotion. Whatever could it be? Bewildered for the moment, I looked around, and saw a hedge laden with white hawthorn blossom, the sweet English 'may.' Every Londoner knows how strongly that beautiful scent appeals to him, even when wafted from draggled branches borne slumwards by tramping urchins who have been far afield despoiling the trees of their lovely blossoms, careless of the damage they have been doing. But to me, who had not seen a bit for years, the flood of feeling, undammed by that odorous breath, was overwhelming. I could hardly tear myself away from the spot, and, when at last I did, found myself continually turning to try and catch another whiff of one of the most beautiful scents in the world.

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● Presently we came to a cottage flooded from ground to roof-ridge with blossoms of scarlet geranium. There must have been thousands of them, all borne by one huge stem which was rooted by the door of the house. A little in front of it grew a fuchsia, twelve or fourteen feet high, with wide-spreading branches, likewise loaded with handsome blooms; while the ground beneath was carpeted with the flowers shaken from their places by the rude wind.

So, through scenes of loveliness that appealed even to the dusky Kanakas, we trudged gaily along, arriving pretty well fagged at our destination—a great glade of tenderest green, surrounded by magnificent trees on three sides; the fourth opening on to a dazzling white beach sloping gently down to the sea. Looking seaward, amidst the dancing, sparkling wavelets, rose numerous tree-clothed islets, making a perfectly beautiful seascape. On either side of the stretch of beach fantastic masses of rock lay about, as if scattered by some tremendous explosion. Where the sea reached them, they were covered with untold myriads of oysters, ready to be eaten and of delicious flavour.

What need to say more? With oyster-feeding, fishing, bathing, treck-climbing, tea-making, song-singing, the hours fled with pitiless haste, so that before we had half emptied the brimming cup of joys proffered us, the slanting rays of the setting sun warned us to return lest we should get 'bushed' in the dark. We came on board rejoicing, laden with spoils of flowers and fish, with two-thirds of our money still in our pockets, and full of happy memories of one of the most delightful days in our whole lives.

A long night's sound sleep was rudely broken into in the morning by the cry of 'Man the windlass.' Having got all we wanted, we were bound away to finish, if luck were with us, the lading of our good ship from the teeming waters of the Solander grounds. I know the skipper's hopes were high, for he never tired of telling how, when in command of a new ship, he once fished the whole of his cargo—six thousand barrels of sperm oil—from the neighbourhood to which we were now bound. He always admitted, though, that the weather he experienced was unprecedented. Still, nothing could shake his belief in the wonderful numbers of sperm whales to be found on the south coasts of New Zealand, which faith was well warranted, since he had there won from the waves, not only the value of his new ship, but a handsome profit in addition, all in one season.

Hearing this kind of thing every day made me feel quite hungry to reach the battle-field; but, for reasons which doubtless were excellent, although I cannot pretend to explain them, we started north about, which not only added nearly one hundred miles to

the distance we had to go, but involved us in a gale which effectually stopped our progress for a week. It was our first taste of the gentle zephyrs which waft their sweetness over New Zealand, after sweeping over the vast, bleak, iceberg-studded expanse of the Antarctic Ocean. Our poor Kanakas were terribly frightened, for the weather of their experience, except on the rare occasions when they are visited by the devastating hurricane, is always fine, steady, and warm. For the first time in their lives they saw hail, and their wonder was too great for words. But the cold was very trying, not only to them, but to us, who had been so long in the tropics that our blood was almost turned to water. The change was nearly as abrupt as that so often experienced by our seamen, who at the rate of sixteen knots an hour plunge from a temperature of eighty degrees to one of thirty degrees in about three days.

We, with the ready adaptability of seamen, soon got accustomed to the bleak, bitter weather, but the Kanakas wilted like hothouse plants under its influence. They were well fed and well clothed, yet they seemed to shrivel up, looking thinner every day, several of them getting deep coughs strongly suggestive of a cemetery. It was no easy task to get them to work, or even move, never a one of them lumbering aloft but I expected him to come down by the run. This was by no means cheering, when it was remembered what kind of a campaign lay before us. Captain Count seemed to be quite easy in his mind, however, and as we had implicit confidence in his wisdom and judgment, we were somewhat reassured.

The gale at last blew itself out, the wind veering to the northward again, with beautiful, spring-like weather, just cool enough to be pleasant, and, withal, favourable for getting to our destination. We soon made the land again about New Plymouth, jogging along near enough to the coast to admire the splendid rugged scenery of the Britain of the south. All hands were kept busily employed preparing for stormy weather—receiving new running-gear, bending the strongest suit of sails, and looking well to all the whaling gear.

In this active exercise of real sailor-work, the time, though long for an ordinary passage, passed quickly and pleasantly away, so that when we hauled round the massive promontory guarding the western entrance to Foveaux Straits, we were almost surprised to find ourselves there so soon.

This, then, was the famous and dreaded Solander whaling ground. Almost in the centre of the wide stretch of sea between Preservation Inlet, on the Middle Island, and the western end of the South, or Stewart's Island, rose a majestic mass of wave-beaten rock some two thousand feet high, like a grim sentinel guarding the Straits. The extent of the fishing grounds was not more than a hundred and fifty square miles, and it was rarely that the vessels

cruised over the whole of it. The most likely area for finding whales was said to be well within sight of the Solander Rock itself, but keeping on the western side of it.

It was a lovely day when we first entered upon our cruising ground, a gentle north-east wind blowing, the sky a deep, cloudless blue, so that the rugged outline of Stewart's Island was distinctly seen at its extreme distance from us. To the eastward the Straits narrowed rapidly, the passage at the other end being scarcely five miles wide between the well-known harbour of the Bluff, the port of Invercargill, and a long rocky island which almost blocked the strait. This passage, though cutting off a big corner, not only shortening the distance from the westward considerably, but oftentimes saving outward bounders a great deal of heavy weather off the Snares to the south of Stewart's Island, is rarely used by sailing-ships, except coasters; but steamers regularly avail themselves of it, being independent of its conflicting currents and baffling winds.

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### *On the Solander Grounds*

OUR opening day was an auspicious one. We had not been within the cruising radius more than four hours before the long-silent cry of 'Blo-o-o-w!' resounded from the mainmast head. It was a lone whale, apparently of large size, though spouting almost as feebly as a calf. But that, I was told by the skipper, was nothing to go by down here. He believed right firmly that there were no small whales to be found in these waters at all. He averred that in all his experience he had never seen a cow-cachalot anywhere around Stewart's Island, although, as usual, he did no theorizing as to the reason why.

Eagerly we took to the boats and made for our first fish, getting alongside of him in less than half an hour from our first glimpse of his bushy breath. As the irons sank into his blubber, he raised himself a little, and exposed a back like a big ship bottom up. Verily, the skipper's words were justified, for we had seen nothing bigger of the whale-kind that voyage. His manner puzzled us not a little. He had not a kick in him. Complacently, as though only anxious to oblige, he laid quietly while we cleared for action, nor did he show any signs of resentment or pain while he was being lanced with all the vigour we possessed. He just took all our assaults with perfect quietude and exemplary patience, so that we could hardly help regarding him with great suspicion, suspecting some deep scheme of devilry hidden by this abnormally sheep-like

demeanour. But nothing happened. In the same peaceful way he died, without the slightest struggle sufficient to raise even an eddy on the almost smooth sea.

Leaving the mate by the carcass, we returned on board, the skipper hailing us immediately on our arrival to know what was the matter with him. We, of course, did not know, neither did the question trouble us. All we were concerned about was the magnanimous way in which he, so to speak, made us a present of himself, giving us no more trouble to secure his treasure than as if he had been a lifeless thing. We soon had him alongside, finding, upon ranging him by the ship, that he was over seventy feet long, with a breadth of bulk quite in proportion to such a vast length.

Cutting-in commenced at once, for fine weather there was by no means to be wasted, being of rare occurrence and liable at the shortest notice to be succeeded by a howling gale. Our latest acquisition, however, was of such gigantic proportions that the decapitation alone bade fair to take us all night. A nasty cross swell began to get up, too—a combination of north-westerly and south-westerly which, meeting at an angle where the Straits began, raised a curious ‘jobble,’ making the vessel behave in a drunken, uncertain manner. Sailors do not mind a ship rolling or pitching, any more than a rider minds the motion of his horse; but when she does both at once, with no approach to regularity in her movements, it makes them feel angry with her. What, then, must our feelings have been under such trying conditions, with that mountain of matter alongside to which so much sheer hard labour had to be done, while the sky was getting greasy and the wind beginning to whine in that doleful key which is the certain prelude to a gale?

Everybody worked like Chinamen on a contract, as if there was no such feeling as fatigue. Little was said, but we all realized that unless this job was got over before what was brooding burst upon us, we should certainly lose some portion of our hard-won whale. Still, our utmost possible was all we could do; and when at daylight the head was hauled alongside for cutting up, the imminent possibility of losing it, though grievous to think of, worried nobody, for all had done their best. The gale had commenced in business-like fashion, but the sea was horrible. It was almost impossible to keep one’s footing on the stage. At times the whole mass of the head would be sucked down by the lee roll of the ship, and go right under her keel, the fluke-chain which held it grinding and straining as if it would tear the bows out of her. Then when she rolled back again the head would rebound to the surface right away from the ship, where we could not reach it to cut. Once or twice it bounced up beneath our feet, striking the stage and lifting it with its living

load several inches, letting it fall again with a jerk that made us all cling for dear life to our precarious perch.

In spite of these capers, we managed to get the junk off the head. It was a tremendous lift for us; I hardly think we had ever raised such a weight before. The skipper himself estimated it at fifteen tons, which was no small load for the tackles in fine weather, but with the ship tumbling about in her present fashion, it threatened to rip the mainmast out by the roots—not, of course, the dead-weight strain; but when it was nearly aboard, her sudden lee wallow sometimes floated the whole mass, which the next instant, on the return roll, would be torn out of water, with all the force of the ship suddenly rolling the other way. Every splinter, every rope-yarn of her groaned again under this savage treatment; but so splendid was her construction that she never made a drop of water more than just sufficient to sweeten the limbers.

It was with great and genuine satisfaction that we saw it at last safely lowered on deck and secured. But when we turned our attention to the case, which, still attached to the skull, battered alongside, any chance of saving it was at once seen to be hopeless. Indeed, as the old man said, it was time for us to 'up stick' and run for shelter. We had been too fully occupied to notice the gradual increase of the wind; but when we did, there was no gainsaying the fact that it was blowing a very stiff breeze (*Anglice*, a violent gale). Fortunately for us, it was from the westward, fair for the harbour of Port William, on the Stewart's Island side of the Straits, so that we were free from the apprehension of being blown out to sea or on a jagged lee shore.

While we were thus thinking during a brief pause to take breath, the old packet herself solved our last difficulty in emphatic fashion. She gave a tremendous lee lurch, which would inevitably have destroyed the cutting stage if we had not hoisted it, driving right over the head, which actually rose to the surface to windward, having passed under her bottom. The weather roll immediately following was swift and sudden. From the nature of things, it was evident that something must give way this time. It did. For the first and only time in my experience, the fluke-chain was actually torn through the piece to which it was fast—two feet of solid gristle ripped asunder. Away went the head with its £150 to £200 worth of pure spermaceti, disappearing from view almost immediately.

It had no sooner gone than more sail was set, the yards were squared, and the vessel kept away up the Straits for shelter. It was a big improvement, for she certainly had begun to make dirty weather of it, and no wonder. Now, however, running almost dead before the gale, getting into smoother water at every fathom, she was steady as a rock, allowing us to pursue our greasy avocation



in comparative comfort. The gale was still increasing, although now blowing with great fury; but, to our satisfaction, it was dry and not too cold. Running before it, too, lessened our appreciation of its force; besides which, we were exceedingly busy clearing away the enormous mass of the junk, which, draining continually, kept the decks running with oil.

We started to run up the Straits at about ten a.m. At two p.m. we suddenly looked up from our toil, our attention called by a sudden lull in the wind. We had rounded Saddle Point, a prominent headland, which shut off from us temporarily the violence of the gale. Two hours later we found ourselves hauling up into the pretty little harbour of Port William, where, without taking more than a couple of hands off the work, the vessel was rounded-to and anchored with quite as little fuss as bringing a boat alongside a ship. It was the perfection of seamanship.

Once inside the bay, a vessel was sheltered from all winds, the land being high and the entrance intricate. The water was smooth as a mill-pond, though the leaden masses of cloud flying overhead and the muffled roar of the gale told eloquently of the unpleasant state of affairs prevailing outside. Two whale-ships lay here—the *Tamerlane*, of New Bedford, and the *Chance*, of Bluff Harbour. I am bound to confess that there was a great difference in appearance between the Yankee and the colonial—very much in favour of the former. She was neat, smart, and seaworthy, looking as if just launched; but the *Chance* looked like some poor old relic of a bygone day, whose owners, unable to sell her, and too poor to keep her in repair, were just letting her go while keeping up the insurance, praying fervently each day that she might come to grief, and bring them a little profit at last.

But although it is much safer to trust appearances in ships than in men, any one who summed up the *Chance* from her generally outworn and poverty-stricken looks would have been, as I was, 'way off.' Old she was, with an indefinite antiquity, carelessly rigged, and vilely unkempt as to her gear, while outside she did not seem to have had a coat of paint for a generation. She looked what she really was—the sole survivor of the once great whaling industry of New Zealand. For although struggling bay whaling stations did exist in a few sheltered places far away from the general run of traffic, the trade itself might truthfully be said to be practically extinct. The old *Chance* alone, like some shadow of the past, haunted Foveaux Straits, and made a better income for her fortunate owners than any of the showy, swift coasting steamers that rushed contemptuously past her on their eager way.

In many of the preceding pages I have, though possessing all an Englishman's pride in the prowess of mine own people, been

compelled to bear witness to the wonderful smartness and courage shown by the American whalers, to whom their perilous calling seems to have become a second nature. And on other occasions I have lamented that our own whalers, either at home or in the colonies, never seemed to take so kindly to the sperm whale fishery as the hardy 'down Easters,' who first taught them the business; carried it on with increasing success, in spite of their competition and the depredations of the *Alabama*; flourished long after the English fishery was dead; and even now muster a fleet of ships engaged in the same bold and hazardous calling. Therefore, it is the more pleasant to me to be able to chronicle some of the doings of Captain Gilroy, familiarly known as 'Paddy,' the master of the *Chance*, who was unsurpassed as a whale-fisher or a seaman by any Yankee that ever sailed from Martha's Vineyard.

He was a queer little figure of a man—short, tubby, with scanty red hair, and a brogue thick as pea-soup. Eccentric in most things, he was especially so in his dress, which he seemed to select on the principle of finding the most unfitting things to wear. Rumour credited him with a numerous half-breed progeny—certainly he was greatly mixed up with the Maories, half his crew being made up of his dusky friends and relations by *marriage*. Overflowing with kindness and good temper, his ship was a veritable ark of refuge for any unfortunate who needed help, which accounted for the numerous deserters from Yankee whalers who were to be found among his crew. Such whaling skippers as our late commander hated him with ferocious intensity; and but for his Maori and half-breed bodyguard, I have little doubt he would have long before been killed. Living as he had for many years on that storm-beaten coast, he had become, like his Maories, familiar with every rock and tree in fog or clear, by night or day; he knew them, one might almost say, as the seal knows them, and feared them as little. His men adored him. They believed him capable of anything in the way of whaling, and would as soon have thought of questioning the reality of daylight as the wisdom of his decisions.

I went on board the evening of our arrival, hearing some rumours of the doings of the old *Chance* and her crew, also with the idea that perhaps I might find some countrymen among his very mixed crowd. The first man I spoke to was Whitechapel to the backbone, plainly to be spotted as such as if it had been tattooed on his forehead. Making myself at home with him, I desired to know what brought him so far from the 'big smoke,' and on board a whaler of all places in the world. He told me he had been a Pickford's van-driver, but had emigrated to New Zealand, finding that he did not at all like himself in the new country. Trying to pick and choose instead of manfully choosing a pick and shovel for

a beginning, he got hard up. During one of Captain Gilroy's visits to the Bluff, he came across my ex-drayman, looking hungry and woe-begone. Invited on board to have a feed, he begged to be allowed to remain; nor, although his assistance was not needed, was he refused. 'An nar,' he said, his face glowing with conscious pride, 'y'ort ter see me in a bloomin' bowt. I ain't a-gowin' ter say as I kin fling wun o' them 'ere bloomin' 'arpoones like ar bowt-steerers kin; but I kin do my bit o' grawft wiv enny on 'em—don'tchu make no bloomin' horror.' The glorious incongruity of the thing tickled me immensely; but I laughed more heartily still when on going below I was hailed as 'Wat cher, chummy; 'ow yer hoppin' up?' by another barbarian from the wilds of Spital-fields, who, from the secure shelter of his cats'-meat round in 'Oxton, had got adrift, and, after being severely buffeted by tempestuous ill-fortune, had finally found himself in the comfortable old *Chance*, a haven of rest in the midst of storms. There were sixteen white men on board the *Chance*, including the skipper, drawn as usual from various European and American sources, the rest of her large crew of over forty all told being made up of Maories and half-breeds. One common interest united them, making them the jolliest crowd I ever saw—their devotion to their commander. There was here to be found no jealousy of the Maories being officers and harpooners, no black looks or discontented murmuring; all hands seemed particularly well satisfied with their lot in all its bearings; so that, although the old tub was malodorous enough to turn even a pretty strong stomach, it was a pleasure to visit her cheerful crowd for the sake of their enlivening society.

Of course, under our present circumstances, with the *débris* of our late enormous catch filling every available space and loudly demanding attention, we had little time to spare for ship visiting. Some boat or other from the two ships was continually alongside of us, though, for until the gale abated they could not get out to the grounds again, and time hung heavy on their hands. The *Tamerlane's* captain avoided Paddy as if he were a leper—hated the sight of him, in fact, as did most of his *confrères*; but our genial skipper, whose crew were every whit as well treated and contented as the *Chance's*, and who therefore needed not to dread losing them, met the little philanthropist on the most friendly terms.

The first fine weather, which came four days after our arrival, both our harbour mates cleared out. Characteristically, the *Chance* was away first, before daylight had quite asserted itself, and while the bases of the cliffs and tops of the rocks were as yet hidden in dense wreaths of white haze. Paddy lolled on the taff-rail near the wheel, which was held by an immense half-breed, who leant back

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and carried on a desultory, familiar conversation with his skipper; the rest of the crew were scattered about the decks, apparently doing what they liked in any manner they chose. The anchor was being catted,\* sails going up, and yards being trimmed; but, to observers like us, no guiding spirit was noticeable. It seemed to work all right, and the old ark herself looked as if she was as intelligent as any of them; but the sight was not an agreeable one to men accustomed to discipline. The contrast when the *Tamerlane* came along an hour or so after was emphatic. Every man at his post; every order carried out with the precision of clockwork; the captain pacing the quarter-deck as if she were a line-of-battle ship—here the airs put on were almost ludicrous in the other direction. Although she was only 'a good jump' long, as we say, whenever an order was given, it was thundered out as if the men were a mile away, each officer appearing to vie with the others as to who could bellow the loudest. That was carrying things to the opposite extreme, and almost equally objectionable to merchant seamen.

We were thus left alone to finish our trying-out, except for such company as was afforded by the only resident's little schooner, in which he went oyster-dredging. It was exceedingly comfortable in the small harbour, and the fishing something to remember all one's life. That part of New Zealand is famous for a fish something like a bream, but with a longer snout, and striped longitudinally with black and yellow. I am ignorant of any polysyllabic prefix for it, only knowing it by its trivial and local appellation of the 'trumpeter,' from the peculiar sound it makes when out of water. But no other fish out of the innumerable varieties which I have sampled in all parts of the world could compare with the trumpeter for flavour and delicacy. These qualities are well known to the inhabitants of the large towns, who willingly pay high prices for the scanty supply of these delicious fish which they are able to obtain. Of other succulent fish there was a great variety, from the majestic 'grouper,' running up to over a hundredweight, down to the familiar flounder. Very little fishing could be done at night. Just as day was dawning was the ideal time for this enticing sport. As soon as the first few streaks of delicate light enlivened the dull horizon, a stray nibble or two gladdened the patient fishermen; then as the light strengthened the fun became general, and in about an hour enough fish would be caught to provide all hands with food for the day.

One morning, when a stark calm left the surface of the bay as smooth as a mirror, I was watching a few stealthily-gliding barracouta sneaking about over the plainly visible bottom, though at a depth of seven or eight fathoms. Ordinarily, these fish must be taken with a live bait; but, remembering my experience with the

dolphin, I determined to try a carefully arranged strip of fish from one recently caught. In precisely the same way as the dolphin, these long, snaky rascals carefully tested the bait, lying still for sometimes as long as two minutes with the bait in their mouths, ready to drop it out on the first intimation that it was not a detached morsel. After these periods of waiting the artful creature would turn to go, and a sudden jerk of the line then reminded him that he was no longer a free agent, but mounting at headlong speed to a strange bourne whence he never returned to tell the tale. My catch that lovely morning scaled over a hundredweight in less than an hour, none of the fish being less than ten pounds in weight.

The Maories have quite an original way of catching barracouta. They prepare a piece of 'rimu' (red pine) about three inches long, by an inch broad, and a quarter of an inch thick. Through one end of this they drive an inch nail bent upwards, and filed to a sharp point. The other end is fastened to about a fathom of stout fishing-line, which is in turn secured to the end of a five-foot pole. Seated in a boat with sail set, they slip along until a school of barracouta is happened upon. Then the peak of the sail is dropped, so as to deaden the boat's way, while the fishermen ply their poles with a sidelong sweep that threshes the bit of shining red through the water, making it irresistibly attractive to a struggling horde of ravenous fish. One by one, as swiftly as the rod can be wielded, the lithe forms drop off the barbless hook into the boat, till the vigorous arm can no longer respond to the will of the fisherman, or the vessel will hold no more.

Such were the goodly proportions of this first Solander whale of ours that, in spite of the serious loss of the case, we made thirteen and a half tuns of oil. When the fifteen huge casks containing it were stowed in their final positions, they made an imposing show, inspiring all of us with visions of soon being homeward bound. For the present we were, perforce, idle; for the wind had set in to blow steadily and strongly right up the Straits, preventing any attempts to get out while it lasted. The time did not hang heavy on our hands, for the surrounding country offered many attractions, which we were allowed to take full advantage of. Spearing eels and flounders at night by means of a cresset hung out over the boat's bow, as she was slowly sculled up the long, shallow creeks, was a favourite form of amusement. Mr. Cross, the resident, kindly allowed us to raid his garden, where the ripe fruit was rotting by the bushel for want of consumers. We needed no pressing; for fruit, since we left Vau Vau, of any kind had not come in our way; besides, these were 'homey'—currants, gooseberries, strawberries—delightful to see, smell, and taste. So it came to pass that we had a high old time, unmarred by a single re-

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grettable incident, until, after an enforced detention of twenty days, we were able to get to sea again.

Halfway down the Straits we sighted the *Chance*, all hands ripping the blubber off a sizeable whale in the same 'anyhow' fashion as they handled their ship. They were in high glee, giving us a rousing cheer as we passed them on our westward course. Arriving on the ground, we found a goodly company of fine ships, which I could not help thinking too many for so small an area. During our absence, the *Tamerlane* had been joined by the *Eliza Adams*, the *Matilda Sayer*, the *Coral*, and the *Rainbow*; and it was evident that no whale venturing within the radius of the *Solander* in the day-time would stand much chance of escaping such a battery of eager eyes. Only three days elapsed after our arrival when whales were seen. For the first time, I realized how numerous those gigantic denizens of the sea really are. As far as the eye could reach, extending all round one-half of the horizon, the sea appeared to be alive with spouts—all sperm whales, all bulls of great size. The value of this incredible school must have been incalculable. Subsequent experience satisfied me that such a sight was by no means uncommon here; in fact, 'lone whales' or small 'pods' were quite the exception.

Well, we all 'waded in,' getting, some two, some one whale apiece, according to the ability of the crews or the fortune of war. Only one fell to our lot in the *Cachalot*, but it was just as well. We had hardly got him fast by the fluke alongside when it began to pipe up from the north-east. In less than one watch the sea was fairly smoking with the fierceness of the wind. We were unable to get in anywhere, being, with a whale alongside, about as handy as a barge loaded with a haystack; while those unfortunate beggars that had two whales fast to them were utterly helpless as far as independent locomotion went, unless they could run dead before the wind. Every ship made all snug aloft, and hoisted the boats to the top notch of the cranes, fully anticipating a long, hard struggle with the elements before they got back to the cruising ground again. Cutting-in was out of the question in such weather; the only thing possible was to hope for a shift of wind before she got too far out, or a break in the weather. Neither of these events was probable, as all frequenters of South New Zealand know, bad weather having there an unhappy knack of being as persistent as fine weather is brief.

Night drew on as our forlorn and heavily handicapped little fleet bore steadily seaward with their burdens, the angry, ever-increasing sea battering at us vengefully, while the huge carcasses alongside tore and strained at their fastenings as if they would rend the ships asunder. Slowly our companions faded from sight

as the murky sky shut down on us, until in lonely helplessness we drifted on our weary way out into the vast, inhospitable Southern Ocean. Throughout the dark and stormy night our brave old ship held on her unwilling way right gallantly, making no water, in spite of the fearful strain to which she was subjected, nor taking any heavy sea over all. Morning broke cheerlessly enough. No abatement in the gale or change in its direction; indeed, it looked like lasting a month. Only one ship was visible far to leeward of us, and she was hull down. Our whale was beginning to swell rapidly, already floating at least three feet above the surface instead of just awash, as when newly killed. The skipper eyed it gloomily, seeing the near prospect of its entire loss, but he said nothing. In fact, very little was said; but the stories we had heard in the Bay of Islands came back to us with significant force now that their justification was so apparent.

Hour after hour went by without any change whatever, except in the whale, which, like some gradually filling balloon, rose higher and higher, till at nightfall its bulk was appalling. All through the night those on deck did little else but stare at its increasing size, which when morning dawned again, was so great that the animal's bilge rode level with the ship's rail, while in her lee rolls it towered above the deck like a mountain. The final scene with it was now a question of minutes only, so most of us, fascinated by the strange spectacle, watched and waited. Suddenly, with a roar like the bursting of a dam, the pent-up gases tore their furious way out of the distended carcass, hurling the entrails in one horrible entanglement widespread over the sea. It was well for us that it was to leeward and a strong gale howling; for even then the unutterable foetor wrought its poisonous way back through that fierce, pure blast, permeating every nook of the ship with its filthy vapour till the stoutest stomach there protested in unmistakable terms against such vile treatment. Knowing too well that the blubber was now worthless, the skipper gave orders to cut the corrupt mass adrift. This was speedily effected by a few strokes of a spade through the small. Away went eight hundred pounds' worth of oil—another sacrifice to the exigencies of the Solander, such as had gained for it so evil a reputation.

Doubtless a similar experience had befallen all the other ships, so that the aggregate loss must have run into thousands of pounds, every penny of which might have been saved had steam been available.

That gale lasted, with a few short lulls, for five days longer. When at last it took off, and was succeeded by fine weather, we were so far to the southward that we might have fetched the Aucklands in another twenty-four hours. But, to our great relief,

a strong southerly breeze set in, before which, under every rag of canvas, we sped north again.

Steady and reliable as ever, that good south wind carried us back to our old cruising ground ere it blew itself out, and we resumed our usual tactics as if nothing had happened, being none the worse as regards equipment for our adventures. Not so fortunate our companions, who at the same time as ourselves were thrust out into the vast Southern Ocean, helplessly burdened and exposed defenceless to all the ferocity of that devouring gale. Two of them were here prowling about, showing evident signs of their conflict in the battered state of their hulls. The glaring whiteness of new planking in many places along the bulwarks told an eloquent story of seas bursting on board carrying all before them, while empty cranes testified to the loss of a boat in both of them. As soon as we came near enough, 'gamming' commenced, for all of us were anxious to know how each other had fared.

As we anticipated, every whale was lost that had been caught that day. The disappointment was in nowise lessened by the knowledge that, with his usual good fortune, Captain Gilroy had not only escaped all the bad weather, but while we were being threshed within an inch of our lives down in the bitter south, he was calmly trying-out his whale (which we had seen him with on our outward journey) in the sheltered haven of Port William. Many and deep were the curses bestowed upon him by the infuriated crews of those two ships, although he had certainly done them no harm. But the sight of other people's good fortune is gall and wormwood to a vast number of people, who seem to take it as a personal injury done to themselves.

Only two days elapsed, however, before we again saw an immense school of sperm whales, and each ship succeeded in securing one. We made no attempt to get more this time, nor do I think either of the others did; at any rate, one each was the result of the day's work. They were, as usual, of huge size and apparently very fat. At the time we secured our fish alongside, a fresh north-westerly wind was blowing, the weather being clear and beautiful as heart could wish. But instead of commencing at once to cut-in, Captain Count gave orders to pile on all sail and keep her away up the Straits. He was evidently determined to take no more chances, but, whenever opportunity offered, to follow the example set by the wily old skipper of the *Chance*. The other ships both started to cut-in at once, tempted, doubtless, by the settled appearance of the weather, and also perhaps from their hardly concealed dislike of going into port. We bowled along at a fine rate, towing our prize, that plunged and rolled by our side in eccentric style, almost as if still alive. Along about midnight we reached Saddle Point, where



there was some shelter from the sea which rolled up the wide open strait, and there we anchored.

Leaving me and a couple of Kanakas on watch, the captain, and all hands besides, went below for a little sleep. My instructions were to call the captain if the weather got at all ugly-looking, so that we might run in to Port William at once, but he did not wish to do so if our present position proved sufficiently sheltered. He had not been below an hour before there was a change for the worse. That greasy, filmy haze was again drawn over the clear blue of the sky, and the light scud began to fly overhead at an alarmingly rapid rate. So at four bells I called him again. He came on deck at once, and after one look round ordered the hands up to man the windlass. By eight bells (four a.m.) we were rounding the frowning rocks at the entrance of Port William, and threading our way between the closely-set, kelp-hidden dangers as if it were broadest, clearest daylight. At 4.30 we let go the anchor again, and all hands, except the regular 'anchor-watch,' bolted below to their bunks again like so many rabbits.

It was very comfortable, cutting-in a sperm whale in harbour, after the dire difficulty of performing the same operation in a seaway. And, although it may seem strange, this was the first occasion that voyage that I had had a really good opportunity of closely studying the whale's anatomy. Consequently the work was exceedingly interesting, and, in spite of the labour involved, I was almost sorry when the job was done. Under the present favourable circumstances we were ready to cut the carcass adrift shortly after midday, the head, of course, having been taken off first. Just after we started to cut-in a boat appeared alongside with six Maories and half-breeds on board. Their leader came up and civilly asked the skipper whether he intended doing anything with the carcass. Upon being promptly answered in the negative, he said that he and his companions proposed hooking on to the great mass when we cut it adrift, towing it ashore, and getting out of it what oil we had been unable to extract, which at sea is always lost to the ship. He also suggested that he would be prepared to take reasonable terms for such oil, which we should be able to mingle with ours to our advantage. An arrangement was speedily arrived at to give him £20 per tun for whatever oil he made. They parted on the best of terms with each other, and as soon as we cut the carcass loose the Maories made fast to it, speedily beaching it in a convenient spot near where they had previously erected a most primitive try-works.

That afternoon, after the head was inboard, the skipper thought he would go ashore and see how they were getting on. I was so fortunate as to be able to accompany him. When we arrived at the

spot, we found them working as I have never seen men work, except perhaps the small riggers that at home take a job—three or four of them—to bend or unbend a big ship's sails for a lump sum to be paid when the work is done. They attacked the carcass furiously, as if they had a personal enmity against it, chopping through the massive bones and rending off huge lumps of the flesh with marvellous speed. They had already laid open the enormous cavity of the abdomen, and were stripping the interminable intestines of their rich coating of fat. In the maw there were, besides a large quantity of dismembered squid of great size, a number of fish, such as rock-cod, barracouta, schnapper, and the like, whose presence there was a revelation to me. How in the name of wonder so huge and unwieldy a creature as the cachalot could manage to catch those nimble members of the finny tribe, I could not for the life of me divine! Unless—and after much cogitation it was the only feasible explanation that I could see—as the cachalot swims about with his lower jaw hanging down in its normal position, and his huge gullet gaping like some submarine cavern, the fish unwittingly glide down it, to find egress impossible. This may or may not be the case; but I, at any rate, can find no more reasonable theory, for it is manifestly absurd to suppose the whale capable of *catching* fish in the ordinary sense, indicating pursuit.

Every part of the animal yielded oil. Even the bones, broken up into pieces capable of entering the pot, were boiled; and by the time we had finished our trying-out, the result of the Maories' labour was ready for us. Less than a week had sufficed to yield them a net sum of six guineas each, even at the very low rate for which they sold us the oil. Except that it was a little darker in colour, a defect that would disappear when mixed with our store, there was no difference between the products that could be readily detected. And at the price we paid for it, there was a clear profit of cent. per cent., even had we kept it separate and sold it for what it was. But I suppose it was worth the Maories' while thus to dispose of it and quickly realize their hard earnings.

So far, our last excursion had been entirely satisfactory. We had not suffered any loss or endured any hardship; and if only such comfortable proceedings were more frequent, the Solander ground would not have any terrors for us at least. But one afternoon there crept in around the eastern horn of the harbour three forlorn and half-dismantled vessels, whose weather-worn crews looked wistfully at us engaged in clearing up decks and putting away gear upon the finishing of our trying-out. Poor fellows! they had seen rough times since that unforgettable evening when we parted from them at the other end of the island, and watched them slowly fade into the night. Two of them were so badly damaged that no further

fishing was possible for them until they had undergone a thorough refit, such as they could not manage there. One was leaking badly; the tremendous strain put upon her hull in the vain attempt to hold on to the two whales she had during the gale having racked her almost all to pieces. The third one was still capable of taking the ground again, with sundry repairs such as could be effected by her crew. But the general feeling among all three crews was that there was more loss than gain to be expected here, in spite of the multitude of whales visiting the place.

As if to fill up their cup, in came the old *Chance* again, this time with a whale on each side. Captain Gilroy was on the house aft, his chubby red face in a ruddy glow of delight, and his crew exuberant. When he passed the American ships, as he was bound to do very closely, the sight of their scowling faces seemed to afford him the most exquisite amusement, and he laughed loud and long. His crew, on the impulse of the moment, sprang to the rail and cheered with might and main. No one could gainsay that they had good reason, but I really feared for a time that we should have 'ructions.' As Paddy said, it was not wise or dignified for those officers to be so angry with him on account of his success, which he frankly owned was due almost entirely to the local knowledge he possessed, gained in many years' study of the immediate neighbourhood. He declared that, as far as the technical duties of whale-fishing went, all the Americans could beat him hollow; but they ought to realize that something else was needed here which no man could hope to have unless he were content to remain on the coast altogether. With which words of wisdom our skipper cordially agreed, bearing in mind his own exploits in the bygone time around those rugged shores.

The strong breeze which brought Paddy and his whales home died down that night, enabling us to start for the grounds again—a concession gratefully received, for not the least of the hindrances felt there was the liability to be 'wind-bound' for a long time, while fine weather was prevailing at the fishing grounds.

We made a fine passage down the Straits with a leading wind, finding our two late companions still cruising, having managed to get their whales aboard without mishap, and being somewhat inclined to chaff our old man for running in. He gave a wink full of wisdom, as he replied, 'I'm pretty ole whale myself naouw; but I guess I ain't too old to learn; 'n wut I learn I'm goin' ter use. See?' Of course the fine weather did not last long—it never does; and seeing the gloomy masses of violet-edged cumuli piling up on the southern horizon, we hugged the Solander Rock itself pretty close, nor ventured far to seaward. Our two consorts, on the contrary, kept well out and on the northern verge, as if they intended

the next gale that blew to get north, if they could. The old man's object in thus keeping in was solely in order that he might be able to run for shelter; but, much to his delight and certainly surprise, as we passed about a mile to the southward of the lonely, towering crags of the great rock, there came from aloft the welcome cry of 'Sperm whale!'

There was only one, and he was uncomfortably near the rock; but such a splendid chance was not to be missed, if our previous training was of any avail. There was some speculation as to what he could be doing so close inshore, contrary to the habit of this animal, who seems to be only comfortable when in deep waters; but except a suggestion that perhaps he had come in to scrape off an extra accumulation of barnacles, nobody could arrive at any definite conclusion. When we reached him, we found a frightful blind swell rolling, and it needed all our seamanship to handle the boats so that they should not be capsized. Fortunately, the huge rollers did not break, or we should hardly have got back safely, whale or no whale.

Two irons were planted in him, of which he took not the slightest notice. We had taken in sail before closing in to him on account of the swell, so that we had only to go in and finish him at once, if he would let us. Accordingly, we went in with a will, but for all sign of life he showed he might as well have been stuffed. There he lay, lazily spouting, the blood pouring, or rather spirting, from his numerous wounds, allowing us to add to their number at our pleasure, and never moving his vast body, which was gently swayed by the rolling sea. Seeing him thus quiescent, the mate sent the other two boats back to the ship with the good news, which the captain received with a grave smile of content, proceeding at once to bring the ship as near as might be consistent with her safety. We were now thoroughly sheltered from sight of the other ships by the enormous mass of the island, so that they had no idea of our proceedings.

Finding that it was not wise to take the ship in any closer, while we were yet some distance from our prize, a boat was sent to Mr. Cruce with the instructions that he was to run his line from the whale back to the ship, if the creature was dead. He (the mate) replied that the whale died as quietly as he had taken his wounds, and immediately started for the ship. When he had paid out all his line, another boat bent on, until we got the end on board. Then we merrily walked him up alongside, while sufficient sail was kept drawing to prevent her being set in any nearer. When he was fast, we crowded on all canvas to get away; for although the sea was deep close up to the cliff, that swell was a very ugly feature, and one which has been responsible for the loss of a great number of

ships in such places all over the world. Notwithstanding all our efforts, we did get so near that every detail of the rock was clearly visible to the naked eye, and we had some anxious minutes while the old ship, rolling tremendously, crawled inch after inch along the awful side of that sea-encircled pyramid.

At one point there was quite a cave, the floor of which would be some twenty feet above high-water mark, and its roof about the same distance higher. It appeared to penetrate some distance into the bowels of the mountain, and was wide and roomy. Sea-birds in great numbers hovered around its entrance, finding it, no doubt, an ideal nesting-place. It appeared quite inaccessible, for even with a perfect calm the swell dashed against the perpendicular face of the cliff beneath with a force that would have instantly destroyed any vessel unfortunate enough to get within its influence.

Slowly, slowly we forged past the danger; but the moment we opened out the extremity of the island, a fresh breeze, like a saving hand, swept across the bows, filling the head-sails and swinging the old vessel away from the island in grand style. Another minute, and the other sails filled also. We were safe, all hands breathing freely once more.

Now the wind hung far round to the eastward—far enough to frustrate any design we might have had of going up the Straits again. The old man, however, was too deeply impressed with the paramount necessity of shelter to lightly give up the idea of getting in somewhere; so he pointed her for Preservation Inlet, which was only some thirty miles under her lee. We crowded all sail upon her in the endeavour to get in before nightfall, this unusual proceeding bringing our two friends up from to leeward with a run to see what we were after. Burdened as we were, they sailed nearly two knots to our one, and consequently intercepted us some while before we neared our port. Great was their surprise to find we had a whale, and very anxious their queries as to where the rest of the school had gone. Reassured that they had lost nothing by not being nearer, it being a 'lone' whale, off they went again.

With all our efforts, evening was fast closing in when we entered the majestic portals of Preservation Inlet, and gazed with deepest interest upon its heavily wooded shores.

*Paddy's Latest Exploit*

NEW ZEALAND is pre-eminently a country of grand harbours ; but I think those that are least used easily bear the palm for grandeur of scenery and facility of access. The wonderful harbour, or rather series of harbours, into which we were now entering for the first time, greatly resembled in appearance a Norwegian fjord, not only in the character of its scenery, but from the interesting, if disconcerting, fact that the cliffs were so steep-to that in some places no anchorage is found alongside the very land itself. There are, however, many places where the best possible anchorage can be obtained, so securely sheltered that a howling south-wester may be tearing the sea up by the roots outside, and you will know nothing of it within, except what may be surmised from the motion of the clouds overhead. It was an ideal place for a whaling station, being right on the Solander.

We found it exceedingly convenient, and much nearer than Port William, but, from the prevailing winds, difficult of access in nine cases out of ten, especially when hampered with a whale. Upon cutting-in our latest catch, an easy explanation of his passive attitude was at once forthcoming. He had been attacked by some whale-ship, whose irons had drawn, leaving deep traces of their presence ; but during the battle he had received *seven* bombs, all of which had entered around his small, but had not exploded. Their general effect had been, I should think, to paralyze the great muscles of his flukes, rendering him unable to travel ; yet this could not have taken place until some time after he had made good his escape from those aggressors. It was instructive, as demonstrating what amount of injury these colossi really can survive, and I have no doubt that, if he had been left alone, he would have recovered his normal energy, and been as well as ever. From our point of view, of course, what had happened was the best possible thing, for he came almost as a gift—the second capture we had made on those grounds of a like nature.

At the close of our operations the welcome news was made public that four more fish like the present one would fill us bung-up, and that we should then, after a brief visit of the Bluff, start direct for home. This announcement, though expected for some time past, gave an amazing fillip to everybody's interest in the work. The strange spectacle was witnessed of all hands being anxious to quit a snug harbour for the sea, where stern, hard wrestling with the elements was the rule. The captain, well pleased

with the eagerness manifested, had his boat manned for a trip to the entrance of the harbour, to see what the weather was like outside, since it was not possible to judge from where the ship lay. On his return, he reported the weather rough, but moderating, and announced his intention of weighing at daylight next morning. Satisfied that our days in the southern hemisphere were numbered, and all anxiety to point her head for home, this news was most pleasing, putting all of us in the best of humours, and provoking quite an entertainment of song and dance until nearly four bells.

During the grey of dawn the anchor was weighed. There was no breath of wind from any quarter, so that it was necessary to lower boats and tow the old girl out to her field of duty. Before she was fairly clear of the harbour, though, there came a 'snifter' from the hills that caught her unprepared, making her reel again, and giving us a desperate few minutes to scramble on board and hoist our boats up. As we drew out from the land, we found that a moderate gale was blowing, but the sky was clear, fathomless blue, the sun rose kindly, a heavenly dream of soft delicate colour preceding him; so that, in spite of the strong breeze, all looked promising for a good campaign. At first no sign could be seen of any of the other ships, though we looked long and eagerly for them. At last we saw them, four in all, nearly hull down to seaward, but evidently coming in under press of sail. So slow, however, was their approach that we had made one 'leg' across the ground and halfway back before they were near enough for us to descry the reason of their want of speed. They had each got a whale alongside, and were carrying every rag of canvas they could spread, in order to get in with their prizes.

Our old acquaintance, the *Chance*, was there, the three others being her former competitors, except those who were disabled, still lying in Port William. Slowly, painfully they laboured along, until well within the mouth of the Straits, when, without any warning, the wind which had been bringing them in suddenly flew round into the northward, putting them at once in a most perilous position. Too far within the Straits to 'up helm' and run for it out to sea; not far enough to get anywhere that an anchor might hold; and there to leeward, within less than a dozen miles, loomed grim and gloomy one of the most terrific rock-bound coasts in the world. The shift of wind had placed the *Chance* farther to leeward than all the rest, a good mile and a half nearer the shore; and we could well imagine how anxiously her movements were being watched by the others, who, in spite of their jealousy of his good luck, knew well and appreciated fully Paddy's marvellous seamanship, as well as his unparalleled knowledge of the coast.

Having no whale to hamper our movements, besides being well

to windward of them all, we were perfectly comfortable as long as we kept to seaward of a certain line and the gale was not too fierce, so for the present all our attention was concentrated upon the labouring ships to leeward. The intervention of the land to windward kept the sea from rising to the awful height it attains under the pressure of a westerly, or a southwesterly gale, when, gathering momentum over an area extending right round the globe, it hurls itself upon those rugged shores. Still, it was bad enough. The fact of the gale striking across the regular set of the swell and current had the effect of making the sea irregular, short, and broken, which state of things is considered worse, as far as handling the ship goes, than a much heavier, longer, but more regular succession of waves.

As the devoted craft drifted helplessly down upon that frowning barrier, our excitement grew intense. Their inability to do anything but drift was only too well known by experience to every one of us, nor would it be possible for them to escape at all if they persisted in holding in much longer. But it was easy to see why they did so. While Paddy held on so far to leeward of them, and consequently in so much more imminent danger than they were, it would be derogatory in the highest degree to their reputation for seamanship and courage were they to slip and run before he did. He, however, showed no sign of doing so, although they all neared, with an accelerated drift, that point from whence no seamanship could deliver them, and where death inevitable, cruel, awaited them without hope of escape. The part of the coast upon which they were apparently driving was about as dangerous and impracticable as any in the world. A gigantic barrier of black, naked rock, extending for several hundred yards, rose sheer from the sea beneath, like the side of an ironclad, up to a height of seven or eight hundred feet. No outlying spurs of submerged fragments broke the immeasurable landward rush of the majestic waves towards the frowning face of this world-fragment. Fresh from their source, with all the impetus accumulated in their thousand-mile journey, they came apparently irresistible. Against this perpendicular barrier they hurled themselves with a shock that vibrated far inland, and a roar that rose in a dominating diapason over the continuous thunder of the tempest-riven sea. High as was the summit of the cliff, the spray, hurled upwards by the tremendous impact, rose higher, so that the whole front of the great rock was veiled in filmy wreaths of foam, hiding its solidity from the seaward view. At either end of this vast rampart nothing could be seen but a waste of breakers seething, hissing, like the foot of Niagara, and effectually concealing the *chevaux de frise* of rocks which produced such a vortex of tormented waters.



Towards this dreadful spot, then, the four vessels were being resistlessly driven, every moment seeing their chances of escape lessening to vanishing-point. Suddenly, as if panic-stricken, the ship nearest to the *Chance* gave a great sweep round on to the other tack, a few fluttering gleams aloft showing that even in that storm they were daring to set some sail. What the manœuvre meant we knew very well—they had cut adrift from their whale, terrified at last beyond endurance into the belief that Paddy was going to sacrifice himself and his crew in the attempt to lure them with him to inevitable destruction. The other two did not hesitate longer. The example once set, they immediately followed; but it was for some time doubtful in the extreme whether their resolve was not taken too late to save them from destruction. We watched them with breathless interest, unable for a long time to satisfy ourselves that they were out of danger. But at last we saw them shortening sail again—a sure sign that they considered themselves, while the wind held in the same quarter, safe from going ashore at any rate, although there was still before them the prospect of a long struggle with the unrelenting ferocity of the weather down south.

Meanwhile, what of the daring Irishman and his old barrel of a ship? The fugitives once safe off the land, all our interest centred in the *Chance*. We watched her until she drew in so closely to the seething cauldron of breakers that it was only occasionally we could distinguish her outline; and the weather was becoming so thick and dirty, the light so bad, that we were reluctantly compelled to lose sight of her, although the skipper believed that he saw her in the midst of the turmoil of broken water at the western end of the mighty mass of perpendicular cliff before described. Happily for us, the wind veered to the westward, releasing us from the prospect of another enforced visit to the wild regions south of the island. It blew harder than ever; but being now a fair wind up the Straits, we fled before it, anchoring again in Port William before midnight. Here we were compelled to remain for a week; for after the gale blew itself out, the wind still hung in the same quarter, refusing to allow us to get back again to our cruising station.

But on the second day of our enforced detention a ship poked her jibboom round the west end of the little bay. No words could describe our condition of spellbound astonishment when she rounded-to, cumbrously as befitting a ship towing a whale, and revealed to us the well-remembered outlines of the old *Chance*. It was like welcoming the first-fruits of the resurrection; for who among sailor men, having seen a vessel disappear from their sight, as we had, under such terrible conditions, would ever have ex-

pected to see her again? She was hardly anchored before our skipper was alongside, thirsting to satisfy his unbounded curiosity as to the unheard-of means whereby she had escaped such apparently inevitable destruction. I was fortunate enough to accompany him, and hear the story at first-hand.

It appeared that none of the white men on board, except the redoubtable Paddy himself, had ever been placed in so seemingly hopeless and desperate a position before. Yet when they saw how calm and free from anxiety their commander was, how cool and business-like the attitude of all their dusky shipmates, their confidence in his ability and resourcefulness kept its usual high level. It must be admitted that the test such feelings were then subjected to was of the severest, for to their eyes no possible avenue of escape was open. Along that glaring line of raging, foaming water not a break occurred, not the faintest indication of an opening anywhere wherein even so experienced a pilot as Paddy might thrust a ship. The great black wall of rock loomed up by their side, grim and pitiless as doom—a very door of adamant closed against all hope. Nearer and nearer they drew, until the roar of the baffled Pacific was deafening, maddening, in its overwhelming volume of chaotic sound. All hands stood motionless, with eyes fixed in horrible fascination upon the indescribable vortex to which they were being irresistibly driven.

At last, just as the fringes of the back-beaten billows hissed up to greet them, they felt her motion ease. Instinctively looking aft, they saw the skipper coolly wave his hand, signing to them to trim the yards. As they hauled on the weather braces, she plunged through the maelström of breakers, and before they had got the yards right round they were on the other side of that enormous barrier, the anchor was dropped, and all was still. The vessel rested, like a bird on her nest, in a deep, still tarn, shut in, to all appearance, on every side by huge rock barriers. Of the furious storm but a moment before howling and raging all around them, nothing remained but an all-pervading, thunderous hum, causing the deck to vibrate beneath them, and high overhead the jagged, leaden remnants of twisted, tortured cloud whirling past their tiny oblong of sky. Just a minute's suspension of all faculties but wonder, then, in one spontaneous, heartfelt note of genuine admiration, all hands burst into a cheer that even overtopped the mighty rumble of the baffled sea.

Here they lay, perfectly secure, and cut in their whale as if in dock; then at the first opportunity they ran out, with fearful difficulty, a kedge with a whale-line attached, by which means they warped the vessel out of her hiding-place—a far more arduous operation than getting in had been. But even this did not exhaust

the wonders of that occasion. They had hardly got way upon her, beginning to draw out from the land, when the eagle-eye of one of the Maories detected the carcass of a whale rolling among the breakers about half a mile to the westward. Immediately a boat was lowered, a double allowance of line put into her, and off they went to the valuable flotsam. Dangerous in the highest degree was the task of getting near enough to drive harpoons into the body; but it was successfully accomplished, the line run on board, and the prize hauled triumphantly alongside. This was the whale they had now brought in. We shrewdly suspected that it must have been one of those abandoned by the unfortunate vessels who had fled, but etiquette forbade us saying anything about it. Even had it been, another day would have seen it valueless to any one, for it was by no means *otto* of roses to sniff at now, while they had certainly salvaged it at the peril of their lives.

When we returned on board and repeated the story, great was the amazement. Such a feat of seamanship was almost beyond belief; but we were shut up to believing, since in no other way could the vessel's miraculous escape be accounted for. The little, dumpy, red-faced figure, rigged like any scarecrow, that now stood on his cutting-stage, punching away vigorously at the fetid mass of blubber beneath him, bore no outward visible sign of a hero about him; but in our eyes he was transfigured—a being to be thought of reverently, as one who in all those qualities that go to the making of a man had proved himself of the seed royal, a king of men, all the more kingly because unconscious that his deeds were of so exalted an order.

I am afraid that, to a landsman, my panegyric may smack strongly of gush, for no one but a seaman can rightly appraise such doings as these; but I may be permitted to say that, when I think of men whom I feel glad to have lived to know, foremost among them rises the queer little figure of Paddy Gilroy.

## 27

*Port Pegasus*

THE wind still holding steadily in the old quarter, our skipper got very restless. He recalled his former exploits, and, firing at the thought, decided then and there to have a trip round to Port Pegasus, in the hope that he might meet with some of his former good luck in the vicinity of that magnificent bay. With the greatest alacrity we obeyed his summons, handling the old bark as if she were a small boat, and the same morning, for the first time, ran out of the Straits to the eastward past Ruapuke Island. Beautiful

weather prevailed, making our trip a delightful one, the wonderful scenery of that coast appealing to even the most callous or indifferent among us. We hugged the land closely, the skipper being familiar with all of it in a general way, so that none of its beauties were lost to us. The breeze holding good, by nightfall we had reached our destination, anchoring in the north arm near a tumbling cascade of glittering water that looked like a long feather laid on the dark-green slope of the steep hill from which it gushed.

We had not been long at anchor before we had visitors—half-breed Maories, who, like the Finns and Canadians, are farmers, fishermen, sailors, and shipwrights, as necessity arises. They brought us potatoes—most welcome of all fruit to the sailor—cabbages, onions, and 'mutton birds.' This latter delicacy is a great staple of their flesh food, but is one of the strangest dishes imaginable. When it is being cooked in the usual way, *i.e.* by grilling, it smells exactly like a piece of roasting mutton; but it tastes, to my mind, like nothing else in the world so much as a kippered herring. There is a gastronomical paradox, if you like. Only the young birds are taken for eating. They are found, when unfledged, in holes of the rocks, and weigh sometimes treble as much as their parents. They are exceedingly fat; but this substance is nearly all removed from their bodies before they are hung up in the smoke-houses. They are split open like a haddock, and carefully smoked, after being steeped in brine. Baskets, something like exaggerated strawberry pottles of the old conical shape, are prepared, to hold each about a dozen birds. They are lined with leaves, then packed with the birds, the melted fat being run into all the interstices until the basket is full. The top is then neatly tied up with more leaves, and, thus preserved, the contents will keep in cool weather an indefinite length of time.

Captain Count was soon recognized by some of his old friends, who were delighted to welcome him again. Their faces fell, however, when he told them that his stay was to be very brief, and that he only required four good-sized fish to fill up. Inquiry as to the prevalence of sperm whales in the vicinity elicited the news that they were as plentiful as they had ever been—if anything, more so, since the visits of the whalers had become fewer. There were a couple of 'bay' whaling stations existing; but, of course, their success could not be expected to be great among the cachalots, who usually keep a respectful distance from harbours, while they had driven the right whales away almost entirely.

No one could help being struck by the manly bearing, splendid physique, and simple manners of the inhabitants. If ever it falls to the lot of any one, as I hope it will, to establish a sperm whale fishery in these regions, there need be no lack of workers while

such grand specimens of manhood abound there as we saw—all, moreover, fishermen and whalers from their earliest days.

We did not go far afield, but hovered within ten or fifteen miles of the various entrances, so as not to be blown off the land in case of sudden bad weather. Even with that timid offing, we were only there two days, when an enormous school of sperm whales hove in sight. I dare not say how many I believe there were, and my estimate really might be biased; but this I know, that in no given direction could one look to seaward and not see many spouts.

We got among them and had a good time, being more hampered by the curiosity of the unattached fish than by the pugnacity of those under our immediate attention. So we killed three, and by preconcerted signal warned the watchers on the lofty points ashore of our success. As speedily as possible off came four boats from the shore stations, and hooked on to two of our fish, while we were busy with the third. The wind being off shore, what there was of it, no time was to be lost, in view of the well-known untrustworthiness of the weather; so we started to cut-in at once, while the shore people worked like giants to tow the other two in. Considering the weakness of their forces, they made marvellous progress; but seeing how terribly exhausting the toil was, one could not help wishing them one of the small London tugs, familiarly known as 'jackals,' which would have snaked those monsters along at three or four knots an hour.

However, all went well; the usual gale did blow, but not till we had got the last piece aboard and a good 'slant' to run in, arriving at our previous moorings at midnight. In the morning the skipper went down in his boat to visit the stations, and see how they had fared. Old hand as he was, I think he was astonished to see what progress those fellows had made with the fish. They did not reach the stations till after midnight, but already they had the whales half flenched, and, by the way they were working, it looked as if they would be through with their task as soon as we were with ours. Their agreement with the skipper was to yield us half the oil they made, and, if agreeable to them, we would take their moiety at £40 per tun. Consequently they had something to work for, even though there were twenty of them to share the spoil. They were a merry party, eminently good tempered, and working as though one spirit animated them all. If there was a leader of the band, he did his office with great subtilty, for all seemed equal, nor did any appear to need directing what to do. Fired by their example, we all worked our hardest; but they beat us by half a day, mainly, I think, by dint of working nearly all the time with scarce any interval for sleep. True, they were bound to take advantage of low water when their huge prize was high and dry—to get at him easily

all round. Their method was of the simplest. With gaff-hooks to haul back the pieces, and short-handled spades for cutting, they worked in pairs, taking off square slabs of blubber about a hundredweight each. As soon as a piece was cut off, the pair tackled on to it, dragging it up to the pots, where the cooks hastily sliced it for boiling, interspersing their labours with attention to the simmering cauldrons.

Their efforts realized twenty-four tuns of clear oil and spermaceti, of which, according to bargain, we took twelve, the captain buying the other twelve for £480, as previously arranged. This latter portion, however, was his private venture, and not on ship's account, as he proposed selling it at the Bluff, when we should call there on our way *home*. So that we were still two whales short of our quantity. What a little space it did seem to fill up! Our patience was sorely tested, when, during a whole week following our last haul, we were unable to put to sea. In vain we tried all the old amusements of fishing, rambling, bathing, etc.; they had lost their 'bite;' we wanted to get home. At last the longed-for shift of wind came and set us free. We had hardly got well clear of the heads before we saw a school of cachalots away on the horizon, some twelve miles off the land to the southward. We made all possible sail in chase, but found, to our dismay, that they were 'making a passage,' going at such a rate that unless the wind freshened we could hardly hope to come up with them. Fortunately, we had all day before us, having quitted our moorings soon after daylight; and unless some unforeseen occurrence prevented us from keeping up our rate of speed, the chances were that some time before dark they would ease up and allow us to approach them. They were heading to the westward, perhaps somewhat to the northward withal, to all appearance making for the Solander. Hour after hour crawled by, while we still seemed to preserve our relative distance, until we had skirted the southern shore of the island and entered the area of our old fishing ground. Two vessels were cruising thereon, well to the northward, and we thought with glee of the excitement that would seize them did they but gain an inkling of our chase.

To our great delight, what we had hoped, but hardly dared expect, came to pass. The school, as if with one impulse, hauled up on their course four points, which made them head direct for the western verge of the Solander ground, and—what was more important to us—made our coming up with them a matter of a short time. We made the customary signals with the upper sails to our friends to the northward, who recognized them immediately, and bore down towards us. Not only had the school shifted their course, but they had slackened speed; so that by four o'clock we were able to lower for them at less than a mile distance.

It was an ideal whaling day—smooth water, a brisk breeze, a brilliant sun, and plenty of whales. I was, as became my position, in the rear when we went into action, and hardly hoped for an opportunity of doing much but dance attendance upon my seniors. But fortune favoured me. Before I had any idea whether the chief was fast or not, all other considerations were driven clean out of my head by the unexpected apparition of a colossal head, not a ship's length away, coming straight for us, throwing up a swell in front of him like an ironclad. There was barely time to sheer to one side, when the giant surged past us in a roar of foaming sea, the flying flakes of which went right over us. Samuela was 'all there,' though, and as the great beast passed he plunged a harpoon into him with such force and vigour that the very socket entered the blubber. It needed all the strength I could muster, even with such an aid as the nineteen-feet steer-oar, to swing the boat right round in his wake, and prevent her being capsized by his headlong rush.

For, contrary to the usual practice, he paused not an instant, but rather quickened his pace, as if spurred. Heavens, how he went! The mast and sail had to come down—and they did, but I hardly know how. The spray was blinding, coming in sheets over the bows, so that I could hardly see how to steer in the monster's wake. He headed straight for the ship, which lay to almost motionless, filling me with apprehension lest he should in his blind flight dash that immense mass of solid matter into her broadside, and so put an inglorious end to all our hopes. What their feelings on board must have been, I can only imagine, when they saw the undeviating rush of the gigantic creature straight for them. On he went, until I held my breath for the crash, when at the last moment, and within a few feet of the ship's side, he dived, passing beneath the vessel. We let go line immediately, as may be supposed; but although we had been towing with quite fifty fathoms drift, our speed had been so great that we came up against the old ship with a crash that very nearly finished us. He did not run any farther just then, but sounded for about two hundred and fifty fathoms, rising to the surface in quite another mood. No more running away from him. I cannot say I felt any of the fierce joy of battle at the prospect before me. I had a profound respect for the fighting qualities of the sperm whale, and, to tell the truth, would much rather have run twenty miles behind him than have him turn to bay in his present parlous humour. It was, perhaps, fortunate for me that there was a crowd of witnesses, the other ships being now quite near enough to see all that was going on, since the feeling that my doings were full in view of many experts and veterans gave me a determination that I would not disgrace either myself

for my ship; besides, I felt that this would probably be our last whale this voyage, if I did not fail, and that was no small thing to look forward to.

All these things, so tedious in the telling, flashed through my mind, while, with my eyes glued to the huge bulk of my antagonist or the hissing vortices above him when he settled, I manœuvred my pretty craft with all the skill I could summon. For what seemed a period of about twenty minutes we dodged him as he made the ugliest rushes at us. I had not yet changed ends with Samuela, as customary, for I felt it imperative to keep the helm while this game was being played. My trusty Kanaka, however, had a lance ready, and I knew, if he only got the ghost of a chance, no man living would or could make better use of it.

The whole affair was growing monotonous as well as extremely wearying. Perhaps I was a little off my guard; at any rate, my heart almost leaped into my mouth when just after an ugly rush past us, which I thought had carried him to a safe distance, he stopped dead, lifted his flukes, and brought them down edgeways with a vicious sweep that only just missed the boat's gunwale, and shore off the two oars on that side as if they had been carrots. This serious disablement would certainly have led to disaster but for Samuela. Prompt and vigorous, he seized the opportune moment when the whale's side was presented just after the blow, sending his lance quivering home all its length into the most vital part of the leviathan's anatomy. Turning his happy face to me, he shouted exultingly, 'How's dat fer high?'—a bit of slang he had picked up, and his use of which never failed to make me smile. 'High' it was indeed—a master-stroke. It must have pierced the creature's heart, for he immediately began to spout blood in masses, and without another wound went into his flurry and died.

Then came the reaction. I must have exerted myself beyond what I had any idea of, for to Samuela I was obliged to delegate the task of fluke-boring, while I rested a little. The ship was soon alongside, though, and the whale secured. There was more yet to be done before we could rest, in spite of our fatigue. The other boats had been so successful that they had got two big fish, and what we were to do with them was a problem not easily solvable. By dint of great exertion, we managed to get another whale alongside, but were fain to come to some arrangement with the *Eliza Adams*, one of the ships that had been unsuccessful, to take over our other whale on an agreement to render us one-third of the product either in Port William or at home, if she should not find us in the former place.

Behold us, then, in the gathering dusk with a whale on either side, every stitch of canvas we could show set and drawing,



straining every nerve to get into the little port again, with the pleasant thought that we were bringing with us all that was needed to complete our well-earned cargo. Nobody wanted to go below; all hands felt that it was rest enough to hang over the rail on either side and watch the black masses as they surged through the gleaming sea. They represented so much to us. Very little was said, but all hearts were filled with a deep content, a sense of a long season of toil fitly crowned with complete success; nor was any depression felt at the long, long stretch of stormy ocean between us and our home port far away in the United States. That would doubtless come by-and-by, when within less than a thousand miles of New Bedford; but at present all sense of distance from home was lost in the overmastering thought that soon it would be our only business to get there as quickly as possible, without any avoidable loitering on the road.

We made an amazing disturbance in the darkness of the sea with our double burthen, so much so that one of the coasting steamers changed her course a bit to range up by our side in curiosity. We were scarcely going two and a half knots, in spite of the row we made, and there was hardly room for wonder at the steamboat captain's hail, 'Want any assistance?' 'No, thank you,' was promptly returned, although there was little doubt that all hands would have subscribed towards a tow into port, in case the treacherous weather should, after all, play us a dirty trick. But it looked as if our troubles were over. No hitch occurred in our steady progress, slow though it necessarily was, and as morning lifted the heavy veil from the face of the land, we arrived at our pretty little haven, and quietly came to an anchor. The *Chance* was in port wind-bound, looking, like ourselves, pretty low in the water. No sooner did Paddy hear the news of our arrival in such fine trim than he lowered his boat and hurried on board of us, his face beaming with delight. Long and loud were his congratulations, especially when he heard that we should now be full. Moreover, he offered—nor would he take any denial—to come with the whole of his crew and help us finish.

For the next four days and nights, during which the wind prevented the *Chance* from leaving us, our old ship was a scene of wild revelry, that ceased not through the twenty-four hours—revelry entirely unassisted by strong waters, too, the natural ebullient gaiety of men who were free from anxiety on any account whatever, rejoicing over the glad consummation of more than two years' toil, on the one hand; on the other, a splendid sympathy in joy manifested by the satisfied crew under the genial command of Captain Gilroy. With their cheerful help we made wonderful progress; and when at last the wind hauled into a favourable quarter, and they

## THE CRUISE OF THE 'CACHALOT'

were compelled to leave us, the back of our work was broken, only the tedious task of poiling being left to finish.

Never, I am sure, did two ships' companies part with more hearty good-will than ours. As the ungainly old tub surged slowly out of the little harbour, her worn-out and generally used-up appearance would have given a Board of Trade Inspector the nightmare; the piratical looks of her crowd were enough to frighten a shipload of passengers into fits; but to us who had seen their performances in all weathers, and under all circumstances, accidental externals had no weight in biassing our high opinion of them all. Good-bye, old ship; farewell, jolly captain and sturdy crew; you will never be forgotten any more by us while life lasts, and in far other and more conventional scenes we shall regretfully remember the free-and-easy time we shared with you. So she slipped away round the point and out of our lives for ever.

By dint of steady hard work we managed to get the last of our greasy work done in four days more, then faced with a will the job of stowing afresh the upper tiers of casks, in view of our long journey home. The oil bought by the skipper on private venture was left on deck, secured to the lash-rail, for discharging at the Bluff, while our stock of water-casks were carefully overhauled and recoopered prior to being stowed in their places below. Of course, we had plenty of room in the hold, since no ship would carry herself full of casks of oil; but I doubt whether, if we had borne a 'Plimsoll's mark,' it would not have been totally submerged, so deep did we lie. Wooding and watering came next—a different affair to our casual exercises in those directions before. Provision had to be made now for a possible four or five months' passage, during which we hoped to avoid any further calls, so that the accumulation of firewood alone was no small matter. We cleared the surrounding neighbourhood of potatoes at a good price, those useful tubers being all they could supply us with for sea-stock, much to their sorrow.

Then came the most unpleasant part of the whole business—for me. It had been a part of the agreement made with the Kanakas that they were not to be taken home with us, but returned to their island upon the termination of the whaling. Now, the time had arrived when we were to part, and I must confess that I felt very sorry to leave them. They had proved docile, useful, and cheerful; while as for my harpooner and his mate Polly, no man could have wished for smarter, better, or more faithful helpers than they were. Strong as their desire was to return to their homes, they too felt keenly the parting with us; for although they had unavoidably suffered much from the inclemency of the weather—so different from anything they had ever previously experienced—they had

been kindly treated, and had moved on precisely the same footing, as the rest of the crew. They wept like little children when the time arrived for them to leave us, declaring that if ever we came to their island again they would use all their endeavours to compel us to remain, assuring us that we should want for nothing during the rest of our lives, if we would but take up our abode with them. The one exception to all this cordiality was Sam. His ideas were running in quite other channels. To regain his lost status as ruler of the island, with all the opportunities for indulging his animal propensities which such a position gave him, was the problem he had set himself, and to the realization of these wishes he had determinedly bent all his efforts.

Thus he firmly declined the offer of a passage back in the *Eliza Adams*, which our captain secured for all the Kanakas; preferring to be landed at the Bluff, with the goodly sum of money to which he was entitled, saying that he had important business to transact in Sydney before he returned. This business, he privately informed me, was the procuring of arms and ammunition wherewith to make war upon his rival. Of course we could not prevent him, although it did seem an abominable thing to let loose the spirit of slaughter among those light-hearted natives just to satisfy the ambition of an unscrupulous negro. But, as I have before noticed, from information received many years after I learned that he had been successful in his efforts, though at what cost to life I do not know.

So our dusky friends left us, with a good word from every one, and went on board the *Eliza Adams*, whose captain promised to land them at Futuna within six months. How he carried out his promise, I do not know; but, for the poor fellows' sakes, I trust he kept his word.

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*To the Bluff, and Home*

AND now the cruise of the good old whaling barque *Cachalot*, as far as whaling is concerned, comes to an end. For all practical purposes she becomes a humdrum merchantman in haste to reach her final port of discharge, and get rid of her cargo. No more will she loiter and pry around anything and everything, from an island to a balk of drift-wood, that comes in her way, knowing not the meaning of 'waste of time.' The crow's-nests are dismantled, taut topgallant-masts sent up, and royal yards crossed. As soon as we get to sea we shall turn-to and heave that ancient fabric of bricks and mortar—always a queer-looking erection to be cumbering a ship's deck—piecemeal over the side. It has long been shaky and

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weather-beaten; it will soon obstruct our movements no more. Our rigging has all been set up and tarred down; we have painted hull and spars, and scraped wherever the wood-work is kept bright. All gear belonging to whaling has been taken out of the boats, carefully cleaned, oiled, and stowed away for a 'full due.' Two of the boats have been taken inboard, and stowed bottom-up upon the gallows aft, as any other merchantman carries them. At last, our multifarious preparations completed, we ride ready for sea.

It was quite in accordance with the fitness of things that, when all things were now ready for our departure, there should come a change of wind that threatened to hold us prisoners for some days longer. But our 'old man' was hard to beat, and he reckoned that, if we could only get out of the 'pond,' he would work her across to the Bluff somehow or other. So we ran out a kedge with a couple of lines to it, and warped her out of the weather side of the harbour, finding, when at last we got her clear, that she would lay her course across the Straits to clear Ruapukè—nearly; but the current had to be reckoned with. Before we reached that obstructing island we were down at the eastern end of it, and obliged to anchor promptly to save ourselves from being swept down the coast many miles to leeward of our port.

But the skipper was quite equal to the occasion. Ordering his boat, he sped away into Bluff harbour, only a matter of six or seven miles, returning soon with a tug, who for a pound or two placed us, without further trouble, alongside the wharf, amongst some magnificent clipper ships of Messrs. Henderson's and the New Zealand Shipping Co.'s, who seemed to turn up their splendid noses at the squat, dumpy, antiquated old serving-mallet that dared to mingle with so august a crowd. There had been a time, not so very far back, when I should have shared their apparent contempt for our homely old tub; but my voyage had taught me, among other things, that, as far as true comfort went at sea, not a 'three-skysail-yarder' among them could compare with the *Cachalot*. And I was extremely glad that my passage round the Horn was to be in my own ship, and not in a long, snaky tank that, in the language of the sailor, takes a header when she gets outside the harbour, and only comes up two or three times to blow before she gets home.

Our only reason for visiting this place being to discharge Captain Count's oil, and procure a sea-stock of salt provisions and hard bread, these duties were taken in hand at once. The skipper sold his venture of oil to good advantage, being so pleased with his success that he gave us all a good feed on the strength of it.

As soon as the stores were embarked and everything ready for

sea, leave was given to all hands for twenty-four hours, upon the distinct understanding that the privilege was not to be abused, to the detriment of everybody, who, as might be supposed, were anxious to start for home. In order that there might be less temptation to go on the spree generally, a grand picnic was organized to a beautiful valley some distance from the town. Carriages were chartered, an enormous quantity of eatables and drinkables provided, and away we went, a regular wayzgoose or bean-feast party. It was such a huge success, that I have ever since wondered why such outings cannot become usual among sailors on liberty abroad, instead of the senseless, vicious waste of health, time, and hard-earned wages which is general. But I must not let myself loose upon this theme again, or we shall never get to sea.

Liberty over without any trouble arising, and all hands comfortably on board again, the news ran round that we were to sail in the morning. So, after a good night's rest, we cast loose from the wharf, and, with a little assistance from the same useful tug that brought us in, got fairly out to sea. All sail was set to a strong, steady north-wester, and with yards canted the least bit in the world on the port tack, so that every stitch was drawing, we began our long easterly stretch to the Horn, homeward bound at last.

Favoured by wind and weather, we made an average run of one hundred and eighty miles per day for many days, paying no attention to 'great circle sailing,' since in such a slow ship the net gain to be secured by going to a high latitude was very small, but dodging comfortably along on about the parallel of 48°S., until it became necessary to draw down towards 'Cape Stiff,' as that dreaded extremity of South America, Cape Horn, is familiarly called by seamen. As we did so, icebergs became numerous, at one time over seventy being in sight at once. Some of them were of immense size—one, indeed, that could hardly be fitly described as an iceberg, but more properly an ice-field, with many bergs rising out of it, being over sixty miles long, while some of its towering peaks were estimated at from five hundred to one thousand feet high. Happily, the weather kept clear; for icebergs and fog make a combination truly appalling to the sailor, especially if there be much wind blowing.

Needless, perhaps, to say, our look-out was of the best, for all hands had a double interest in the safety of the ship. Perhaps it may be thought that any man would have so much regard for the safety of his life that he would not think of sleeping on his look-out; but I can assure my readers that, strange as it may seem, such is not the case. I have known men who could never be trusted not to go to sleep, no matter how great the danger. This is so well recognized in merchant ships that nearly every officer acts as if

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there was no look-out at all forward, in case his supposed watchman should be having a surreptitious doze.

Stronger and stronger blew the brave west wind; dirtier, gloomier, and colder grew the weather, until, reduced to two topsails and a reefed foresail, we were scudding dead before the gale for all we were worth. This was a novel experience for us in the *Cachalot*, and I was curious to see how she would behave. To my mind, the supreme test of a ship's sea-kindliness is the length of time she will scud before a gale without 'pooping' a sea or taking such heavy water on board over her sides as to do serious damage. Some ships are very dangerous to run at all. Endeavouring to make the best use of the gale which is blowing in the right direction, the captain 'hangs on' to all the sail he can carry, until she ships a mighty mass of water over all, so that the decks are filled with wreckage, or, worse still, 'poops' a sea. The latter experience is a terrible one, even to a trained seaman. You are running before the wind and waves, sometimes deep in the valley between two liquid mountains, sometimes high on the rolling ridge of one. You watch anxiously the speed of the sea, trying to decide whether it or you are going the faster, when suddenly there seems to be a hush, almost a lull, in the uproar. You look astern, and see a wall of water rising majestically higher and higher, at the same time drawing nearer and nearer. Instinctively you clutch at something firm, and hold your breath. Then that mighty green barrier leans forward, the ship's stern seems to settle at the same time, and, with a thundering noise as of an avalanche descending, it overwhelms you. Of course the ship's way is deadened; she seems like a living thing overburdened, yet struggling to be free; and well it is for all hands if the helmsman be able to keep his post and his wits about him. For if he be hurt, or have fled from the terrible wave, it is an even chance that she 'broaches to;' that is to say, swings round broadside on to the next great wave that follows relentlessly its predecessor. Then, helpless and vulnerable, she will most probably be smashed up and foundered. Many a good ship has gone with all hands to the bottom just as simply as that.

In order to avoid such a catastrophe, the proper procedure is to 'heave-to' before the sea has attained so dangerous a height; but even a landsman can understand how reluctant a shipmaster may be to lie like a log just drifting, while a more seaworthy ship is flying along at the rate of, perhaps, three hundred miles a day in the desired direction. Ships of the *Cachalot's* bluff build are peculiarly liable to delays of this kind from their slowness, which, if allied to want of buoyancy, makes it necessary to heave-to in good time, if safety is at all cared for.

To my great astonishment and delight, however, our grand old

vessel nobly sustained her character, running on without shipping any heavy water, although sometimes hedged in on either side by gigantic waves that seemed to tower as high as her lowermast heads. Again and again we were caught up and passed by the splendid homeward-bound colonial packets, some of them carrying an appalling press of canvas, under which the long, snaky hulls, often overwhelmed by the foaming seas, were hardly visible, so insignificant did they appear by comparison with the snowy mountain of swelling sail above.

So we fared eastward and ever southward, until in due time up rose the gloomy, storm-scarred crags of the Diego Ramirez rocks, grim outposts of the New World. To us, though, they bore no terrific aspect; for were they not the turning-point from which we could steer north, our head pointed for home? Immediately upon rounding them we hauled up four points, and, with daily improving weather, climbed the southern slopes towards the line.

Very humdrum and quiet the life appeared to all of us, and had it not been for the saving routine of work by day, and watch by night, kept up with all our old discipline, the tedium would have been insupportable after the incessant excitement of expectation to which we had so long been accustomed. Still, our passage was by no means a bad one for a slow ship, being favoured by more than ordinarily steadfast winds until we reached the zone of the south-east trades again, where the usual mild, settled wind and lovely weather awaited us. On and on, unhasting but unresting, we stolidly jogged, by great good fortune slipping across the 'doldrums'—that hateful belt of calms about the line so much detested by all sailor-men—without losing the south-east wind.

Not one day of calm delayed us, the north-east trades meeting us like a friend sent to extend a welcoming hand and lend us his assistance on our homeward way. They hung so far to the eastward, too—sometimes actually at east-by-north—that we were able to steer north on the starboard tack—a slice of luck not usually met with. This 'slant' put all hands in the best of humours, and already the date of our arrival was settled by the more sanguine ones, as well as excellent plans made for spending the long voyage's earnings.

For my part, having been, in spite of my youth, accustomed to so many cruel disappointments and slips between the cup and lip, I was afraid to dwell too hopefully upon the pleasures (?) of getting ashore. And after the incident which I have now to record occurred, I felt more nervous distrust than I had ever felt before at sea since first I began to experience the many vicissitudes of a sailor's life.

We had reached the northern verge of the tropics in a very short

time, owing to the favourable cant in the usual direction of the north-east trades before noted, and had been met with north-westerly winds and thick, dirty weather, which was somewhat unusual in so low a latitude. Our look-outs redoubled their vigilance, one being posted on each bow always at night, and relieved every hour, as we were so well manned. We were now on the port tack, of course, heading about north-east-by-north, and right in the track of outward-bound vessels from both the United Kingdom and the States. One morning, about three a.m.—that fateful time in the middle watch when more collisions occur than at any other—suddenly out of the darkness a huge ship seemed to leap right at us. She must have come up in a squall, of which there were many about, at the rate of some twelve knots an hour, having a fair wind, and every rag of sail set. Not a gleam of light was visible anywhere on board of her, and, to judge from all appearances, the only man awake on board was the helmsman.

We, being 'on the wind, close-hauled,' were bound by the 'rule of the road at sea' to keep our course when meeting a ship running free. The penalty for doing *anything* under such circumstances is a severe one. First of all, you do not *know* that the other ship's crew are asleep or negligent, even though they carry no lights; for, by a truly infernal parsimony, many vessels actually do not carry oil enough to keep their lamps burning all the voyage, and must therefore economize in this unspeakably dangerous fashion. And it may be that just as you alter your course, daring no longer to hold on, and, as you have every reason to believe, be run down, the other man alters his. Then a few breathless moments ensue, an awful crash, and the two vessels tear each other to pieces, spilling the life that they contain over the hungry sea. Even if you escape, *you* are to blame for not keeping your course, unless it can be proved that you were not seen by the running ship.

Well, we kept our course until, I verily believe, another plunge would have cut us sheer in two halves. At the last moment our helm was put hard down, bringing our vessel right up into the wind at the same moment as the helmsman on board the other vessel caught sight of us, and instinctively put his helm down too. The two vessels swung side by side amidst a thunderous roar of flapping canvas, crackling of fallen spars, and rending of wood as the shrouds tore away the bulwarks. All our davits were ripped from the starboard side, and most of our bulwarks too; but, strangely enough, we lost no spars nor any important gear. There seemed to be a good deal of damage done on board the stranger, where, in addition, all hands were at their wits' end. Well they might be, aroused from so criminal a sleep as theirs. Fortunately, the third mate had a powerful bull's-eye lantern, which in his



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watch on deck he always kept lighted. Turning it on the stern of the delinquent vessel as she slowly forged clear of us, we easily read her name, which, for shame's sake as well as for prudential reasons, I withhold. She was a London ship, and a pretty fine time of it I had for the next day or two, listening to the jeers and sarcasms on the quality of British seamanship.

Repairing damages kept us busy for a few days; but whatever of thankfulness we were capable of feeling was aroused by this hairbreadth escape from death through the wicked neglect of the most elementary duty of any man calling himself a seaman.

Then a period of regular Western-ocean weather set in. It was early spring in the third year since our departure from this part of the world, and the north-easter blew with bitter severity, making even the seasoned old captain wince again; but, as he jovially said, 'it smelt homey, n' he warn't a-goin' ter growl at thet.' Neither were any of us, although we could have done with less of a sharp edge to it all the same.

Steadily we battled northward, until at last, with full hearts, we made Cape Navesink ('Ole Neversunk'), and on the next day took a tug and towed into New Bedford with every flag we could scare up flying, the centre of admiration—a full whale-ship safe back from her long, long fishing round the world.

My pleasant talk is done. I wish from my heart it were better performed; but, having done my best, I must perforce be content. If in some small measure I have been able to make you, my friendly reader, acquainted with a little-known or appreciated side of life, and in any wise made that life a real matter to you, giving you a fresh interest in the toilers of the sea, my work has not been wholly in vain. And with that fond hope I give you the sailor's valedictory—

SO LONG



**THE LOG OF A SEA-WAIF**  
**BEING RECOLLECTIONS OF THE FIRST**  
**FOUR YEARS OF MY SEA LIFE**

*To*

J. ST. LÖE STRACHEY

*in grateful recognition  
of his unwearying encouragement of  
and persistent kindness to*

THE AUTHOR

*this book is affectionately dedicated.*

## PREFACE

NOTWITHSTANDING the oft-reiterated statement that the days of sea romance are over, it may well be doubted whether any period of our literary history has been more prolific in books dealing with that subject than the last twenty-five years. Nor does the output show any signs of lessening, while the quality of the work done is certainly not deteriorating. Writers like Kipling, Cutcliffe Hyne, Joseph Conrad, and Clark Russell, each in his own style, have presented us with a series of sea-pictures that need not fear comparison with any nautical writers' work of any day, although they deal almost exclusively with the generally considered unromantic merchant service. Having admitted this, the question perforce follows, 'Who, then, are you, that presumes to compete with these master magicians?'

To that inevitable question I would modestly answer that the present book is in no sense a competitor with the works of any writers of nautical romance. But having been for fifteen years a seafarer in almost every capacity except that of a master, and now, by the greatest kindness and indulgence on the part of men holding high positions in the literary world, being permitted to cater for the reading public in sterling periodicals, it has often occurred to me how little landsmen really know of the seaman's actual life. 'Two Years before the Mast,' although written by an American, and of life on board an American merchantman, has long held undisputed sway as a classic upon the subject. And for the only reason, as it seems, that no serious attempt has been made by a Britisher to do the same thing for life in British ships.

Still, conscious as I certainly am of small literary equipment for such a task, I should hardly have dared to try my hand but for the encouragement most generously and persistently given me by Mr. J. St. Loe Strachey, who, with that large faith in another's abilities that breeds confidence in its object, however diffident, urged me strongly to tell the public some of my experiences of sea-life. And his advice to me was to set them down, just as they occurred, as nearly as memory would permit. Of course, it was not possible to cover the whole field of my experiences at once, except in the most scrappy and unsatisfactory way, and therefore I decided to take the first four years—from the age of twelve to sixteen. Following my friend's advice, I have written nothing but the truth, and, in most cases, I have given the real names of ships and individuals. If the book, then, does not please, it will be owing

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to my lack of discrimination between interesting and commonplace details, and not because the pictures given of life at sea in the fore-castle are not faithful.

And now, 'as I know that there are a great many people who do not read prefaces, I will close mine by humbly commending this 'autobiography of a nobody' to that tremendous tribunal, with whom lies the verdict of success or failure, and from whose fiat there is no appeal—the Public.

CAMBERWELL, *September, 1899*

FRANK BULLEN

## *My First Ship*

MANY boys clamour for a sea life, will not settle down to anything ashore, in spite of the pleading of parents, the warnings of wisdom, or the doleful experiences of friends. Occasionally at schools there breaks out a sort of epidemic of 'going to sea,' for which there is apparently no proximate cause, but which rages fiercely for a time, carrying off such high-spirited youths as can prevail upon those responsible for them to agree to their making a trial of a seafaring life. All this is quite as it should be, of course, in order that Britain may continue to rule the waves; but many a parent, whose affectionate projects for the future of his offspring are thus rudely shattered, bitterly resents what he naturally considers to be unaccountable folly.

In my own case matters were quite otherwise. I belonged to the ignoble company of the unwanted. In spite of hard usage, scanty food, and overwork, I ridiculously persisted in living, until, at the approach of my twelfth year, an eligible opening presented itself for me to go to sea. Being under no delusions whatever as to the prospect that awaited me, since I had known intimately those who had experienced all the vicissitudes of a sailor's life, I was not unduly elated at the idea. Nevertheless, food and shelter were objects peculiarly hard of attainment ashore, while I felt satisfied that at sea these necessities would be always provided, even if their quality was none of the best.

The vessel in which I obtained a berth as cabin-boy was commanded by my uncle: a stubborn, surly, but thoroughly capable old seaman. Soured by misfortune and cross-grained by nature, it was small wonder that he had no friends, not even the sterling honesty of his character, or his high ability, being sufficient to counterbalance the drawback of his atrocious temper. His latest command was not calculated to improve him, for she was a survival of a bygone day, clumsy as a Dutch galliot, impoverished by her owner, who was heartily sick of seeing her afloat, and would have rejoiced to hear that she was missing; and withal leaky as a basket. When I first saw her huddled into a more than usually dirty corner of the West India Docks, I was filled with wonder to see that her cutwater was sunken between two swelling bows like the cheeks of a conventional cherub. Though I could be no critic of marine construction, this seemed an anomaly for which there appeared to be no excuse. Her bowsprit and jibboom soared into the air exactly like those of the galleons of old, and her three skimpy

masts stood like broomsticks at different angles—the foremast especially, which looked over the bows.

It was a bleak, gloomy day in January when I first beheld her. The snow, which had fallen heavily for some days previously, was, wherever it could be, churned into filthy slush, and where undisturbed, was begrimed more into the similitude of soot-heaps than anything else. Everything wore a pinched, miserable appearance. So forbidding and hopeless was the outlook that, had it been practicable, I should certainly have retreated. But there was no choice; I had burned my bridges.

Climbing on deck, I found such a state of confusion and dirt reigning as I could hardly have believed possible. Owing to the parsimony of the owner, not even a watchman had been kept on board, and, in consequence, the decks had not smelt a broom for a month. The cargo and stores were littered about so that progress was gymnastic, while in every corner and hollow lay the dirty snow. Several discontented-looking men were engaged aloft bending sails, others were gradually coaxing the cargo on deck into the hold, but no one seemed to have any energy left. Seated upon an up-ended beef-cask was a truculent-looking individual whom I instinctively regarded as the boss. Him, therefore, I timidly approached. Upon hearing my message, he rolled off his throne and led the way aft, uttering all the time some, to me, perfectly unintelligible sounds. I made no pretence of answering, so I suppose he took me for a poor idiot hardly worthy of his attention. When, after some effort, he disappeared down the cabin companion, I was close behind him, and, understanding his gestures better than his speech, made out that here was to be the scene of my future labours. The place was so gloomy that I could distinguish none of its features by sight; but the atmosphere, a rank compound of the reek of bilgewater, mouldering stores, and unventilated sleeping-places, caught me by the throat, making my head swim and a lump rise in my chest. A small locker by the ladder's foot, reminding me curiously of a rabbit-hutch, was pointed out to me as my berth, but I naturally supposed it to be a place for my bag. How could I have dreamed that it was also to be my chamber? But everything began to reel with me, so, blindly clutching the ladder, I struggled on deck again, where the bitter wind soon revived me.

Henceforth no one noticed me, so I roamed about the deck, prying into holes and corners, until the stevedores knocked off for dinner. Presently the mate came towards where I sat, shivering and solitary, on the windlass end, and made me understand that I was to come ashore with him. He conducted me through a labyrinth of mean streets to a spacious building in a wide thoroughfare, around



which were congregated many little groups of seamen of all nations. We entered the place at once, and soon reached a large bare room crowded with seamen. Here I was told to wait while Mr. Svensen went to seek the captain. While I stood bewildered by the bustle of the crowded place, I heard occasional hoarse demands for 'Three A.B.'s an' one ordinary for Pernambuck!' 'Cook an' stooard for Kingston, Jamaica!' 'All the croo of the *Star o' Peace*!' and similar calls, each followed by a general rush towards the speaker, accompanied by a rustling of discharges in the air as their owners sought to attract attention.

After about an hour's wait I heard the cry 'Croo of the *Arabella* here!' which was followed by the usual rush; but, to the disappointment of the watchers, the whole of the crew had been already selected. One by one they squeezed through the crowd into an office beyond, whither I managed to follow. I was too much amazed at the hurly-burly to notice who were to be my future shipmates, but I paid a sort of awe-struck attention to the reading of the 'articles.' Doubtless much excuse must be made for the officials, who have to gabble the same rigmarole over so many times each working day; but I certainly think some attempt might always be made that the essential parts of the agreement should be clear to men who are about to bind themselves for a long period to abide by it. In our case, the only words clearly accented, heard, and understood by all, were the last three, 'no spirits allowed.' Each man then signed the articles, or made his mark, ending with myself, when I found I was entitled to receive five shillings per month, without any half-pay or advance. Each of the men received a month's advance, in the form of a promissory-note, payable three days after the ship left the Downs, 'providing the said seaman sails in the said ship.' None of them lost any time in getting away to seek some accommodating (?) shark to cash their notes at an average discount of about forty per cent., most of the proceeds being payable in kind.

This important preliminary over, I was free till next morning, when all hands were ordered on board by ten o'clock. Not feeling at all desirous of returning to the ship, yet being penniless, and in a strange part of London, I made my way westward to the Strand, where I soon managed to pick up enough for a meal. I spent the night in Hyde Park in a snug corner, unknown to the police, that had often served me as a refuge before. At daybreak I started East, arriving on board at about half-past nine very tired and hungry. The mate eyed me suspiciously, saying something which I guessed to be uncomplimentary, although I was still unable to understand a word. But, as before, he did not interfere with me or set me any task.

The litter of cases, bales, etc., about the deck was fast disappearing under the strenuous exertions of the stevedores and dock-wallopers, while the raffle of gear aloft was reduced to as near an approach to orderly arrangement as it could ever be expected to assume. Presently a grimy little paddle-steamer came alongside, through the clustering swarm of barges, and was made fast ahead and astern. An individual with a stentorian voice, a pilot suit, mangy fur cap, and brick-red face mounted the forecastle, bellying out orders apparently addressed to no one in particular. Their effect was at once evident, however, for we began to move deliberately away from the wharf, splitting the crowd of barges asunder amid the sulphurous remarks of their attendants. Once out into the comparatively clear centre of the dock, we made good progress until the last lock was reached; but there we came to a full stop. As yet none of the crew had arrived, the vessel being handled by a shore-gang so far. After about a quarter of an hour's delay, during which the captain and pilot exhausted their vocabulary in abuse of the laggards, the latter hove in sight, convoyed by a motley crowd of tailor's 'runners,' boarding-masters, and frowsty looking women.

They made a funny little group. The sailors were in that happy state when nothing matters—least of all the discounter of an advance-note; hence the bodyguard of interested watchers, who would leave no stone unturned to see that their debtors went in the ship, although, being under the vigilant eyes of the police, they dared not resort to violent means. The ladies, possessing but a fast-fading interest in outward bounders, were probably in evidence more from slackness of business than any more sentimental cause. But having cajoled or coerced Jack to the pierhead, he seemed unpersuadable to the final step of getting aboard. Again and again a sailor would break lose and canter waveringly shoreward, only to be at once surrounded by his escort and hurriedly hauled back again. At last, exasperated beyond endurance by the repetition of these aimless antics, the skipper sprang ashore followed by the pilot. Bursting in upon the squabbling crowd, they seized upon a couple of the maudlin mariners, hurling them on board as if they had been made of rubber. With like vigour the rest were embarked, their 'dunnage' flung after them; the warps were immediately let go, and the ship began to move ahead.

Outside the dock-gate a larger tug was waiting in readiness to hook on as soon as we emerged, and tow us down the river. With a final shove, accompanied by a stifling belch of greasy smoke, our sooty satellite shook herself free of us, retreating hastily within the basin again, while, obedient to the increasing strain on our hawser ahead, we passed rapidly out into the crowded stream.

During the uneventful trip the shore-gang, under the direction of Mr. Svensen and the second mate (who, being also the carpenter, was always known as 'Chips'), worked indefatigably to get the decks clear for sea—lashing spars, water-casks, boats, &c. But their efforts were greatly hindered by the crew, who, not being sufficiently drunk to lie still in the fore-castle, persisted in tumbling continually about the decks, offering assistance while getting in everybody's way. In vain were they repeatedly conducted to their dog-hole; no sooner were they left than they were out again, until the hard-working 'lumpers' were ready to jump on them with rage.

Meanwhile I grew so weary of standing about that I was quite grateful when Chips ordered me to fetch him a marlinespike. What he wanted I had not the slightest idea; but, unwilling to confess such ignorance, I ran forward and asked a labourer who was stowing the cable. He told me that it was a pointed bar of iron with a hole at one end for a lanyard to hang it round the neck by, adding that I should find some in the fo'lk'sle, 'right forrard in the eyes of her.' Away I went into the thick darkness of the men's dirty cave, groping my way into its innermost recesses among the bags, chests, and beds with which the deck was bestrewn. Reaching the farthest corner, I felt a great bundle of something upon what I took for a shelf, which barred my further search. Tugging heartily at it to get it out of my way, I suddenly felt it move! I did not wait to investigate, but floundered back on deck again almost witless from fright. Breathlessly I reported to Chips my discovery, which brought him quickly to the spot with a light. Sure enough there was a sea-bag, about six feet long, stuffed full—the draw-string tightly closing the mouth. As soon as it was touched, there was a movement within. Its contents were evidently alive. Chips and his assistant promptly muzzled the bag, dragging it out on deck, and, casting the cord adrift, turned it bottom upwards. Out there tumbled, head foremost, a lanky nigger-lad, who had been missing since the previous morning and given up as having deserted. On being questioned as to the meaning of this freak, he humbly explained that, despairing of ever getting warm again, he had put on his entire wardrobe, lain down in his bunk, and crept into his bag, managing somehow to draw the string tight over his head; that he had been there ever since, and was likely to have died there, since he could not get his arms up again to let himself out. He was dismissed to work with a grim promise of being warmed in an altogether different fashion if he was again guilty of skulking.

Upon arrival at Gravesend we anchored; the tremendous racket made by the cable rushing over the windlass giving me a great fright. I thought the bottom of the ship had fallen out. The tug departed for a berth close at hand, the pilot and shore-gang leaving

us in a wherry. I looked longingly after them as they went, for I felt strangely that the last link connecting me with England was now broken, and, although I had not a single soul ashore to regret me, or one corner that I could think of as home, there was sufficient sadness in the thought of leaving the land of my birth to bring to my eyes a few unaccustomed tears.

Fortunately the cook, a worn-out seaman, who, in common with most vessels of that class, we carried for the double duty of cook and steward, was now sober enough to get supper ready. In the emphatic sea-phrase, he 'Couldn't boil salt water without burning it;' but, as nobody expected anything different, that passed without comment. My regular duties now began: my uncle, the captain, giving me my first lesson in laying the table sea-fashion, showing me where to find the gear, and so on. The curious atmospheric compound below was appreciably improved, but still there was a prismatic halo round the swinging lamp. The skipper and his two officers took no notice of it, seeming quite at their ease as they silently ate their humble meal, though I got a racking headache. Supper over, I was ordered to 'Clear away the wreck,' and get my own meal in the pantry: a sort of little-ease in a corner of the cuddy, wherein a man might successfully block all the crockery from falling out by inserting his body in its midst. Hungry as I was, I could not eat there, but stealthily seized the opportunity, as soon as the skipper had retired to his state-room, to flee forrard to the galley with the cook. His domain consisted of an erection about six feet square, with sliding doors on either side, which was lashed firmly down to ring-bolts in the deck. A coal-locker ran across it at the back, its lid forming a seat. Between it and the stove there was just room to turn, while most of the cooking utensils—no great store—had permanent positions on the range.

Here, by the dim flicker of an antique contrivance of a lamp like a handleless teapot—the wick sticking out of the spout and giving almost as much smoke as flame,—I spent quite a pleasant hour with the ancient mariner who ruled there, eating a hearty supper of biscuit and tea. He was not in the best of spirits, for the drink was dying out of him; but his garrulous, inconsequent talk amused me mightily. At last, feeling that I might be wanted, I returned to the cabin, where I found the captain and Chips making melody with their snores; Mr. Svensen being on deck keeping watch, for which none of the crew were yet available. And, finding no other corner wherein I might creep, I made just such a lair as a dog might, in the hutch that held my scanty stock of clothing, and, crawling into it, was soon in the land of perfect peace.

*Outward-Bound*

SOMETHING banging at the bulkhead close to my ear aroused me from a deep sleep in great alarm. The hole in which I lay was so pitchy dark that, even when I realized where I was, which took some little time, I fumbled fruitlessly about for several minutes before I finally extricated myself. When at last I stood upright on the cuddy-deck, I saw the captain seated at the table writing. He looked up and growled, 'Now then, look lively! Didn't you hear, 'Man the windlass'?' Alas! I knew no more what he meant than as if he had spoken in Hebrew; but I gathered somehow that I ought to be on deck. Up I scrambled into a bitter, snow-laden north-east wind and darkness that, but for the strange sheen of the falling flakes, was almost Egyptian. Shivering as much with queer apprehensions as with cold, I hurried forrard, where I found the mate and Chips hard at work getting the hands out of the fo'lk'sle, and up on top of it, to where the two gaunt levers of the windlass made a blacker streak in the prevailing darkness. Tumbling up against Jem, the darky, he said, as well as his chattering teeth would allow, 'Specs yo gotter haul back chain longer me, boy; yars a hook fer yer,'—putting into my hand, as he spoke, a long iron hook with a cross-handle. Then, when at last the half-dead sailors began to work the levers, and the great clumsy windlass revolved, Jem and I hooked on to the massive links of the cable, dragging it away from the barrel and ranging it in long flakes beside the fore-hatch. Every few fathoms, when the chain had worked its way right across the barrel, and the turns were beginning to jam one another up against the bitt, Jem called out, 'Fleet, oh!' Then a couple of men descended from Mount Misery and hooked a mighty iron claw, which was secured by a stout chain to the bitt, on to the cable before the windlass. This held the whole weight while the turns of chain were loosed and laboriously lifted back to the other end of the windlass-barrel again. When thick with mud, so that each link was more like a badly made raw brick than aught else, this primitive performance was an uncouth job, and I could imagine many pleasanter occupations.

Two o'clock on a winter's morning, struggling with mud-besmeared masses of iron, upon a footing so greasy that standing was a feat, hungry and sleepy withal, there was little romance about this business. At last the mate bawled, 'She's short, sir!' and told the men to "Vast heavin'." Out of the gloom around the tugboat emerged, coming close alongside to receive her end of the

big rope by which she was to drag us out to sea. No sooner was it fast than a strange voice aft—the Channel pilot's—roared out, 'Heave right up, sir!' 'Aye, aye, sir!' answered the mate. 'Heave 'way, boys!' The clatter of the pawls recommenced, continuing until the anchor was as high as it would come. The subsequent 'catting' and 'fishing' of the big 'mud-hook' was all a confused dream to me. All I knew was that I had to sit down and pull at a rope which was wound round a capstan by the steady tramp of the crew, of whom one would occasionally growl at me to mind my 'surge,' and I would feel a jerk at my rope that shook me up dreadfully. It seemed an interminable job; but, like everything else, came to an end at last. The mate now walked aft, ordering Jem and my small self to coil ropes up and clear away generally. But he called out almost immediately, 'All hands lay afe to muster!' The whole crowd slouched aft, grouping themselves at the break of the poop, where a sort of elevated deck began just before the mizzenmast. Each individual's name was now read out and answered to as announced. I found that there were six able seamen, and the nigger-boy, Jem, 'foremast hands.' The captain, mate, Chips, cook, and myself formed the 'afterguard.'

The 'crowd' were now divided into watches, the mate having first 'pick for the port watch, and getting Jem over. This ceremony concluded, the word was passed to 'Pumpship.' Several grumbling comments were made on the 'one-arm sailor' pumps: a mean, clumsy contrivance, only fit for the smallest vessels, requiring twice the exertion for half the result obtainable from any of the late patents. But the amazement and disgust of the fellows can hardly be imagined when, after half an hour's vigorous 'Clankety, clankety, clankety, bang!'—three strokes and a pause as the fashion is—there was no sign of a 'suck.' A burly Yorkshireman, leaning up against the brake to mop his brow, said, 'Well, boys, if this—old scow ain't just sprung a leak, or bin left fur 'bout a month thout pumpin', we're in for a—fine thing ov it.' There was hardly any intelligible response, they all seemed choking with rage and curses. However, they sucked her out, and then the big man asked Chips quietly whether that 'spell' was usual. Chips assured him that she had not been baled out for a long time, and that she would certainly 'take up' in a day or two. Oil on the troubled waters, but very risky, for he had only just joined himself; nor did he know anything of the old tub's previous record.

Meanwhile the cook, or 'doctor,' as his sea-sobriquet is, had been busy making coffee. Unlike any beverage called by that name ashore, even the funny mixture sold at a halfpenny a cup at street corners being quite luxurious in comparison with it, yet it was a godsend—boiling hot, with plenty of sugar in it—to those poor

wretches with the quenchless thirst of many days' indulgence in the vilest liquor making their throats like furred old drain-pipes. It calmed the rising storm, besides doing them a vast amount of physical good. I was at once busy supplying the wants of the officers, to whom the refreshment was heartily welcome. All the time, we were ploughing steadily along behind the strenuous tug at a greater rate than ever I saw the old bark go afterwards. (I have omitted to mention that we were bound for Demerara with a general cargo, but our subsequent destination was not settled yet.) All hands were allowed a pretty long spell of rest, with the exception of the man at the wheel, and one on the look-out, because, until we were well out, sail would have been more hindrance than help. The wind increased as we got farther down, until, as we passed out of the river, quite a sea was rising, to which the old hooker began to bob and curtsey like a country girl looking for a situation. The relentless tug, however, tore her through the fast-rising waves, making them break over the bows in heavy spray. This was uncomfortable, but the motion was far worse. All the horrors of sea-sickness came suddenly upon me, and, like an ailing animal, I crept into a corner on the main-hatch under the long-boat, wishing for oblivion. Sea-sickness is a theme for jesting, no doubt, but those who have suffered from it much, know how little room there is for laughter at such suffering—suffering too for which, at the time, there seems no hope of alleviation except the impossible one of the motion ceasing.

From that morning for several days I remained in this miserable condition, not caring a pin's point whether I lived or died, nor, with the sole exception of the negro, Jem, did any one else on board seem to give me one moment's thought. Not that I would lightly accuse them of cruelty or callous indifference to suffering; but, being all fully occupied with their work, they had little leisure to attend to a seasick urchin that was of small use at his best. However, poor black Jem never forgot me, and, although he had nothing likely to tempt my appetite, he always brought his scanty meals to where I lay helpless under the long-boat, trying in various quaint ways to coax me into a returning interest in life. Fortunately for me, the wind held in a quarter that enabled the ship to get out of the Channel fairly soon, considering her limitations, and, once across the dreaded stretch of the Bay of Biscay, she speedily ran into fine weather and smoother seas.

When I did eventually find my sea-legs, and resumed my duties in the cabin, I was received with no good grace by my uncle or the doctor. The latter had, indeed, special cause to feel himself aggrieved, since he had borne the burden of double duty during my illness: a hardship which he was a long time in forgetting. But

she was an unhappy ship. The skipper held aloof from everybody, hardly holding converse with the mate. He even kept the ship's reckoning alone, not accepting the mate's assistance in taking the sun for the longitude in the morning, but doing it all himself after a fashion of his own, so that the chief officer was as ignorant of the vessel's true position as I was. Then the food, both forrard and aft, was, in addition to being strictly on the abominable official scale which is a disgrace to a civilized country, of so unspeakably vile a quality that it was hardly fit to give to well-reared pigs. I have often seen the men break up a couple of biscuits into a pot of coffee for their breakfast, and, after letting it stand a minute or two, skim off the accumulated scum of vermin from the top—maggots, weevils, etc.—to the extent of a couple of table-spoonsful, before they could shovel the mess into their craving stomachs. Enough, however, for the present on the food-question, which, being one of the prime factors in a sailor's life, must continually be cropping up.

The bleak, biting edge of the winter weather was now gone, the steady north-easterly breeze blew mild and kindly, while from an almost cloudless heaven the great sun beamed benignantly—his rays not yet so fierce as to cause any discomfort. My sensations on first discovering that no land was visible, that we seemed the solitary centre of an immense blue circle, whose sharply defined circumference was exactly joined to the vast azure dome overhead, were those of utter loneliness and terror. For I knew nothing of the ways of navigators across this pathless plain, nor realized any of the verities of the subject set forth in the few books I had read. School learning I had none. Had there been any one to whom I could have gone for information, without fearing a brutal repulse, I should doubtless have felt less miserable; but, as it was, use alone gradually reconciled me to the solemn silence of the illimitable desert around. At rare intervals vessels appeared, tiny flecks of white upon the mighty waste, which only served to emphasize its immensity as the solitary light of a taper does the darkness of some huge hall.

But the sea itself was full of interest. Of course I had little leisure; but what I had was spent mostly in hanging spell-bound over the side, gazing with ever-growing wonder and delight upon this marvellous world of abounding life. This early acquired habit never left me, for, many years afterwards, when second mate of one of our finest passenger clippers, I enjoyed nothing so much as to pass an hour of my watch below, seated far out ahead of the ship by the martingale, gazing down into the same beautiful sea.

There were no books on board or reading matter of any kind, except the necessary works on navigation on the captain's shelf; so it was just as well that I could take some interest in our surroundings, if I was not to die mentally as most of the sailors



seemed to have done. As I got better acquainted with them, even daring to pay stolen visits to their darksome home in timorous defiance of the stern orders of my uncle, I found, to my amazement, that they could tell me nothing of what I wanted to know. Their kindness often went the length of inventing fabulous replies to my eager questions, but they seemed totally ignorant of anything connected with the wonders of the ocean.

The days slipped rapidly away, until we entered the Sargasso Sea, that strange vortex in the middle of the Atlantic. It was on a Sunday morning, when, according to custom, no work was a-doing, except for the doctor and me. Even our duties were less exacting than usual; so that I was able to snatch many a short spell of gazing overside at the constantly increasing masses of Gulf-weed that, in all its delicate beauty of branch and bud, came brushing past our sides. That afternoon the sea, as far as eye could reach, bore no bad resemblance to a ripe hayfield, the weed covering the water in every direction, with hardly a patch of blue amid the prevailing yellow. Before the light trade-wind we were hardly able to make any headway through the investing vegetation, which overlaid the waves so heavily that the surface was smooth as a millpond. Through the bewildering mazes of that aquatic forest roved an innumerable multitude of fish of every shape, size, and hue, while the branches themselves swarmed with crustacea, so that a draw-bucket full of weed would have furnished quite a large-sized aquarium with a sufficiently varied population. I could have wished the day forty-eight hours long; but I was the only one on board that derived any pleasure from the snail-like progress we made. The captain's vexation showed itself in many ways, but mostly in inciting Chips to order various quite uncalled-for jobs of pulling and hauling, which provoked the watch so much that there was a continual rumble of bad language and growling. Even the twenty minutes' spell at the pumps, which, from its regularity every two hours, now passed almost unnoticed, was this afternoon the signal for a great deal of outspoken and unfavourable comment upon the characters of ship, owner, and captain. The latter gentleman paced his small domain with uncertain tread, as usual; but the glitter in his eye, and the set of his heavily bearded lips, showed how sorely he was tempted to retaliate. But he prudently forbore, well aware of his helplessness in case of an outbreak, as well as being forced to admit full justification for the bitter remarks that were so freely indulged in.

Indeed, it was a serious question how long the present peace would last. The rigging was dropping to pieces; so that a man never knew, when he went aloft, whether he would not come crashing down by the run, from the parting of a rotten footrope

or a perished seizing. The sails were but rags, worn almost to the thinness of muslin, every flap threatening to strip them from the yards. There was no material for repairs, no new rope, canvas, or 'seizing-stuff;' half a barrel of Stockholm tar, and a few pieces of old 'junk' for sennit and spunyarn, representing all the boatswain's stores on board. In fact, the absence of all those necessities, which are to be found on board the most poverty-stricken of ships, for their bare preservation in serviceable condition, was a never-failing theme of discussion in the folksle. And one conclusion was invariably arrived at, albeit the avenues of talk by which it was reached were as tortuous and inconsequent as could well be. It was the grim one that the *Arabella* was never intended to return. This thought tinctured all the men's ideas, embittered their lives, and made the most ordinary everyday tasks seem a burden almost too grievous to be borne.

Had it not been for the overwhelming evidence that the condition of the afterguard was almost as miserable as their own, the abject humility of the mate, in spite of his really good seamanship, and the hail-fellow-well-met way in which Chips confessed his utter ignorance of all sailorizing whatever, I very much doubt whether there would not have been a mutiny before we were a fortnight out. But as the villainous food and incessant pumping were not aggravated by bullying and 'working up,' matters jolted along without any outbreak. Born as I was under an unlucky star, my insignificance nearly overthrew the peace that was so precariously kept. The deadly dulness of the cabin was so stifling, that I felt as if I should die there in the long, dreary evenings between supper and bunk. Nothing to read, nobody to speak to, nothing to do, and forbidden with threats to go forrard among the men—that I should transgress sooner or later was a certainty. I took to creeping forrard oftener and more openly, because no detection followed, until a sharp rope's-ending from my uncle brought me up 'with a round turn,' as the sailor says. By this time I had become rather a favourite forrard, as well as something of a toy, being very small for my age and precocious as might be expected from my antecedents. One man especially—Joe, the big Yorkshireman—became strongly attached to me, endeavouring to teach me thoroughly the rudiments of sailorizing. This was at considerable sacrifice of his own time, which, as he was an ardent model-maker, was sufficient proof of his liking for me.

Now I was almost destitute of clothing, and what little I did possess I was rapidly growing out of. So the next day after my disciplinary castigation, Joe walked aft in his watch below demanding audience of the skipper. There was an unpleasant scowl on the old man's face, as he came on deck to see the audacious

man, that boded ill for the applicant in any case. But when Joe boldly tackled him for a bit of light canyas whereof he might make me a 'Cunarder' (a sort of habergeon) and a pair of trousers, the skipper's face grew black with rage. The insult, all the grosser for its truth, was too obvious. When he found his tongue, he burst into furious abuse of Joe for daring to come aft on such an errand. Joe, being no lamb, replied with interest, to the delight of his fellows, who strolled aft as far as the mainmast to hear the fun. This unseemly wrangle, so subversive of all order or discipline, lasted for about ten minutes, during which time I stood shivering at the foot of the cabin ladder in dread of the sequel. Finally the old man, unable to endure any more, roared, 'Get forrard or I'll shoot ye, ye d—d ugly thief of a sea-lawyer! I'll have ye by the heels yet, an' w'en I do ye'll think Jemmy Smallback's gruppin' ye!' With this parting shot he turned on his heel without waiting the retort discourteous that promptly followed, descending abruptly into the cabin with the ironical cheers of the delighted crew ringing unmelodiously in his ears.

Under such provocation it was little wonder that I paid for all. It must have been balm to my relative's wounded pride to rope's-end me; at any rate, he did so with a completeness that left nothing to be desired. And, in order to avenge himself fully, he closed our interview by kicking me forrard, daring me, at the same time, ever to defile his cabin again with my mischief-making presence under pain of neck-twisting.

Of course I was received in the fo'lk'sle with open arms. My reception went far to mollify my sore back, for the seclusion of the cabin had grown so hateful, that I would willingly have purchased my freedom from it with several such coltings as I had endured, not to speak of the honour of being welcomed as a sort of martyr. Before long I owned quite a respectable rig-out, made up, by the dexterity of Joe, from all sorts of odds and ends contributed by all hands at a tarpaulin muster. Now each man vied with the other in teaching me all they knew of their business, and I was such an apt pupil that, in a short time, they were able to boast that there was no knot or splice known to seafarers, that I was not capable of making in sailor fashion. Being no climber, as might be expected from an urchin born and bred in London streets, getting used to the rigging was unpleasant at first; but that was mastered in its turn, until nothing remained unlearned but the helm. The one aim, apparently, of every man forrard was to so fit me for the work I might be called upon to do, as that no excuse might be found for cruelty of any sort. Whether I had the ability to meet his demands or not, it did not seem prudent for the old man to try his hand on me again in the colting line, and I went gaily enough on my progressive way.

*Arrival at Demerara*

If all sea-voyages were like the usual passage to the West Indies, except for an occasional nasty spell of weather in the English Channel, the sailor's life would be a very easy one. Day succeeds day under the same limpid blue sky fringed at the horizon with a few tufts of woolly cumuli. Placid as a sheltered lake, every wavelet melting into its fellow like a caress, the sapphire sea greets the gazer every morning like a glad smile of unfathomable love. Beautiful beyond description is the tender tropical sea, and hard indeed it is to realize that this same delightful expanse of inexpressible loveliness can ever become the unappeasable destroyer, before whose wrath even the deep-rooted islands seem to shake.

The nights rival the days. During the absence of the moon the blue-black vault appears like a robe of imperial purple, besprent with innumerable diamonds of a lustre unknown to earth's feeble gems. So brilliant is the radiance of the heavenly host that even the unassisted eye can detect the disc of Venus or Jupiter, while the twin streams of the Galaxy literally glow with diffused light, suggesting unutterable glories in their unthinkable depths. And up from the horizon towards the zenith, with clear yet indefinite outline, as of the uplifted finger of God, rises the mysterious conical flame-shadow of the Zodiacal Light. Under such a sky the sea seems to emulate the starry vault above, for in its darkling depths there is a marvellous display of gleaming coruscations. In the foam churned up by the vessel's bows they sparkle and glitter incessantly, while in her wake, where the liquid furrow still eddies and whirls from the passing of the keel, there are a myriad dancing lights of every size and degree of brilliancy. Like a bevy of will-o'-the-wisps they sport and whirl, glow and fade—never still, never alike, yet always lovely.

But when the full-orbed moon in a molten glow of purest silver, before which the eye shrinks almost with pain, traverses the purple concave as a conquering queen escorted by her adoring subjects, the night becomes a sweeter, softer day, in which men may sit at ease reading or working as fancy dictates. They dare not sleep in that white glare, lest with distorted features and sightless eyeballs, they vainly regret their careless disregard of the pale beam's power. And as the stately satellite settles slowly horizonwards, or ascends majestically towards the zenith, how dazzling the mile-wide pathway of shimmering radiance she sheds along the face of the deep! The whalers, with more poetic feeling than one would expect, call it the 'moon-glade,' as though she must needs spread a savan-

nah of splendour for her solemn progress over the waste of ocean.

Here, perhaps, I should pause to disarm criticism, if possible. Such thoughts as I have feebly tried to express were undoubtedly mine in those youthful days, in spite of squalid surroundings and brutal upbringing. And if I could fairly reproduce the multitude of fancies which throng my memory as being the daily attendants of my boyish daydreams, I should fear no unfavourable reception of such a book as they would make.

But to our voyage. Coming on deck one morning soon after daylight, I was startled to notice that the bright blue of the sea was gone. In its place a turbid leaden flood without a sparkling wavelet extended all around. I asked the doctor what this strange change meant. 'Gettin' near land, I s'pose!' was his gruff reply. Nor did I get any other explanation from the men, for none of them knew that we were in fresh water, which, rushing down to the sea from many mighty rivers, overlaid the heavier salt flood for a great distance from land. We did not sight the lightship *Demerara* until next day at noon, although we were going at fully five knots an hour. Behind it the low palm-fringed coast lay like a sullen black cloud-bank just appearing above the horizon, for in truth it was almost level with the sea. Thicker and dirtier grew the water, until, as we passed the light-vessel, we seemed to be sailing in a sea of mud. Between her and the shore we anchored for the night and to await the coming of the pilot; thus closing our outward passage, which might have been as successfully performed in an open boat, so steadily fine had we found the weather.

What a strange sensation is that of first inhaling the breeze from a foreign shore! I stood on the forecastle that evening, hardly able to realize that we had crossed the Atlantic, full of queer feelings as the heavy sweet scent of the tropical forest came floating languidly off from that dim, dark line of land. There was a continual chorus of insects, like a myriad crickets chirping, the sharp, crisp notes curiously undertoned by the deep bass of the sleepy line of surf upon the beach. But this persistent music, by its unvarying monotony, soon became inaudible, or acted as a lullaby to which we all succumbed except the anchor-watch.

Shortly after daylight a large canoe came alongside, manned by negroes, bearing a pompous-looking negro pilot in what he, no doubt, took to be a very swell costume of faded serge, surmounted by a huge straw hat. He mounted the side by the man-ropes, with the air of a conqueror. As he stepped over the rail with a ludicrous assumption of importance, he said, patronizingly, 'Good mawnin', cap'n, hope you'se berry well, sah?' 'Mornin', pilot, same t' you,' curtly answered the old man; and, in almost the same breath, 'D'ye think there's water 'nough on the bar frus? We're drawin'

fourteen feet aft.' 'Neb' mine 'bout dat, cap'n; dat'll be all right. Ise bettin' big money dis yah packet gwine beat 'nuff watah 'head ob her ter float in er linerbattle ship. Gorbress my sole, ef I ebber see sich er front eend on er craf' in my days. Wasser name? de *Ark* doan' it? ha! ha! ha!'—and he threw back his head, laughing so capaciously that the broad, glistening range of his teeth illuminated his coal-black visage like a shutter flung suddenly open to the sun. But the old man looked sour. Such jeering at his command by a nigger was in some sort a reflection on himself, and, thenceforward, he held no more converse with our sable guide than was necessary for the working of the ship.

We were soon under way, though poor Jem and myself got in a disgusting condition of mud by the time the anchor was up. The folk'sle, too, from the fact of the cable running through it, was like a neglected sewer, the blocks of foul-smelling mud dropping continually from the links as they came in through the hawsepipes. All sail was loosed previously, but only the jib was set until the anchor was out of the ground, when, humoured by the helm, she turned kindly off the wind, gathering way from its pressure on her broad stern, while the 'mudhook' was hove right up. Then everything was set that would draw, the wind being fair and strong; but, in spite of the favourable conditions, our progress against the turbulent ebb of the great river was so slow that we were the best part of the day going the few miles that lay between the roadstead and the moorings.

But at last we reached the group of vessels which lay off the business part of the town. With great skill our pilot tried a 'flying moor,' letting our anchor go while we were forging ahead at a good rate, then immediately clewing up all sail. By the time our way was exhausted, about ninety fathoms had been paid out on the first anchor. The second was then let go, its cable being veered away as the first one was hove in, until an equal amount was out on each; both were then hove in till the moorings were taut, and the vessel swung almost on a pivot. This is a ticklish evolution to perform successfully in a crowded anchorage; but, in our case, the result was entirely satisfactory, saving much labour.

The sails being furled and decks cleared up, work ceased for the day. The curious appearance of the wide verandahed houses embowered in strange-looking trees, the assortment of vessels of all rigs—from the smart Yankee schooner to the stately iron coolie-ship from Calcutta, the muddy rushing river—all claimed attention, but for one attraction that outweighed them all. Waiting alongside were two or three bumboats well stocked with fruit, soft-tack, eggs, and such curios as a sailor might be supposed to covet. I had seen such fruit before, on the other side of plate-glass windows in the West End of London, or in the avenue at Covent

Garden, but never in such generous profusion as now. One boat especially was laden to the gunwale with giant bunches of crimson bananas, each fruit treble the size of ordinary ones; baskets of golden mangoes, green limes, luscious-looking oranges flecked with green, and clusters of immature cocoa-nuts: the kind that only contain sweet juice and delicate jelly within a soft shell covered by husk as easy to cut as a turnip. People accustomed to regular meals of decent food cannot imagine how the sight of these dainties affected our ill-used stomachs. Happily there was little delay in choosing our purveyor, who promptly hoisted great part of his stock on deck for us to choose from. In virtue of being the only person in the fo'lk'sle who could write, I was appointed book-keeper, my remuneration being a fair proportion of the good things without payment. In reply to eager inquiries, the bumboatman declared that he had no rum, saying that he very well understood the unwritten law prohibiting the supply of intoxicants by the bumboats, and assuring the men that if he were detected breaking it, he would forfeit his license as well as all payment for goods he had supplied on credit.

We were a happy company that evening. A plentiful meal after such long abstinence put every one in good spirits, although there was much wishing for the cup that both cheers and inebriates. In spite of this want, joviality was the order of the night. Song and dance went merrily round, at which the two darkey boat-boys, hired by the skipper to take him backwards and forwards to the shore, assisted with great glee. Their fun was spontaneous and side-splitting, seeming superior to all external influences—a well of continual merriment bubbling up. Song, quip, and practical joke followed one another incessantly, with all the thoughtless abandon of happy children, and mirthful enjoyment that might have thawed an anchorite. All the pent-up laughter of the passage burst out that evening, the first really jolly one I had ever spent.

At daylight all hands were busy rigging cargo-gear, for our lading was long overdue. The discharging-gang of negroes were early on board, awaiting only our preparations to begin their work. They were akin to the boat-boys in their behaviour. Poor, even to the most utter raggedness of the sacking most of them were covered with—hunger-bitten, for all the provision brought by the majority was a tiny loaf, and about two ounces of sugar each—they were yet full to the lips with sheer animal delight of living. Some, the haughty aristocrats of the party, proudly displayed fragments of salt fish or rusty-looking salt pork, flanked by a green plantain, a coco, or chunk of wooden-looking yam; but though these favoured ones were evidently stuck up, their poorer brethren showed no envy. Their pay was the equivalent of one shilling per day, which, as the price of food was high, except for a very few

# THE LOG OF A SEA-WAIF

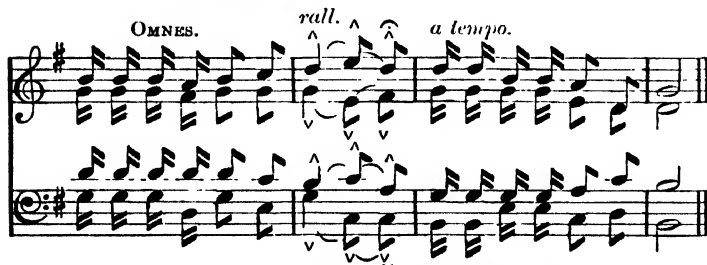
local products, must have been all too little to keep hunger at bay. Yet, when they got to work, how they did go at it! They seemed to revel in the labour, although the incessant singing they kept up ought to have taken most of their breath. Streaming with sweat, throwing their bodies about in sheer wantonness of exuberant strength as they hoisted the stuff out of the hold, they sometimes grew so excited by the improvisations of the 'chantey man,' who sat on the corner of the hatch solely employed in leading the singing, that often, while for a minute awaiting the next hoist, they would fling themselves into fantastic contortions, keeping time to the music. There was doubtless great waste of energy; but there was no slackness of work or need of a driver. Here is just one specimen of their songs; but no pen could do justice to the vigour, the intonation and the *abandon* of the delivery thereof. ♪



Sis-ter Seusan, my Aunt Sal, Gwineter git a home bime-by - high !



All gwineter lib down shin bone al, Gwineter git a home bime-by.



Gwineter git a home bime-by - e-high, Gwineter git a home bime-by.



The rushing, muddy stream literally swarmed with ground-sharks, who sometimes came to the surface with a rush, looking terribly dangerous. Yet the negroes took but little heed of them, merely splashing a bit before diving if they had occasion to go down and clear some vessel's moorings. Sharks and cat-fish were the only fish to be seen: neither of them available for eating. Strange to say, the great heat troubled me very little. Perhaps because, having for so long regarded cold as one of the chief miseries of my life, the steady searching warmth by night and day was grateful to my puny body. At any rate, but that the bloodthirsty mosquitoes and sandflies tormented me cruelly, as they did all hands, the tropical climate suited me very well. It may have been the healthy season too, for, as far as I know, there was no illness on board any of the ships. All our crew were in robust health, and putting on flesh daily in consequence of the liberal diet.

I wanted much to go ashore, but dared not ask leave; but, to my astonishment, on Sunday afternoon the mate told me to get ready and come ashore with him. Glad as I was of the chance to see a little of this strange land, I felt small gratification at the prospect of being his companion; I would rather a thousand times have gone with Joe. However, it being Hobson's choice as well as dangerous to refuse, I rigged myself up as best I could (a queer figure I made too), got into the boat with my inviter, and away we went. Landing at one of the 'sterlings,' as the wharves are locally named, we strolled up into the main street in silence. It was a wide avenue with quite a river running down the centre, and doubtless on weekdays would have been very lively. But at this time it was deserted, except by a few stray dogs and sleeping negroes. We trudged along without a word, till suddenly Mr. Svensen hauled up at a grog-shop, the bar of which was crowded with seafarers. Pressing through the throng to the bar he called for some drink, and, meeting a couple of his countrymen, entered at once into an animated conversation with them in Norwegian. For over an hour I waited impatiently, the air of the place being stifling and the babel of tongues deafening. At last, in desperation, I crept in behind him and attracted his attention. He turned sharply upon me, saying, 'Vell, 'n vat *jou* vant?' 'Please, sir,' I humbly replied, 'may I go an' have a look round?' 'Oh, co to hell ef *jou* lige, I ton'd care. Only *jou* ked bag to der poad pefoar sigs o'clock, or I be tamt ef I tond trown *jou* coin' off—see!' 'Thank you, sir,' I said gratefully, disappearing promptly before he had time to change his mind.

What an afternoon I had, to be sure. I wandered right out of the town through tangled paths crowded on either side by the loveliest flowers growing wild I had ever dreamed of. I was like

a boy in a dream now, except for that haunting reality 'sigs o' clog.' And, to crown my pleasures, when I had strayed as far as I dared, I came suddenly upon a pretty villa in an open glade, the house itself being embowered in the most gorgeous blossoms. I went up to the back of the premises to beg a drink of water, which an amiable negress gave me with a beaming smile, squeezing into it a fresh-fallen lime with a large spoonful of white sugar. While I drank, a dear little white boy about five years old came running round the corner. When he saw me he stood for a moment as if petrified with astonishment; then, recovering his wits, darted back again. A kindly-faced man in white, with a big brown beard, then appeared, leading the little one. After a few inquiries he invited me into the house to tea, treating me with so much kindness that, between his attentions and those of his beautiful, weary-looking wife, I was several times upon the point of bursting into tears. She plied me with questions, soon getting all my sorrowful little life-story out of me; and more than once I saw her furtively wipe away a tear. The little son sat on my knee, great friends with me at once; and what with the good fare, the pleasant talk, and the comfort of it all, I forgot everything else in the world for a time. Suddenly I caught sight of the clock—it was a quarter to six. I must have looked terrified, for my host, Mr. Mackenzie, asked me with much solicitude whether I felt suddenly ill. As soon as he heard the cause of my alarm he left the house, returning to the front in a minute or two with a beautiful mule and a smart trap. I took a hurried leave of my kind hostess and her child, promising to come again if I could; and presently found myself bowling along a level road at a great rate behind the swift hybrid, who seemed to glide rather than trot. Arriving at the boat, nearly half an hour late, we found the mate not yet there, one of the boat-boys volunteering the information that he was well drunk up at the rum-mill. 'That being so,' said Mr. Mackenzie, 'I will see you on board.' So we shoved off for the ship. During our short transit I told my new friend how matters stood between my uncle and myself, begging him not to inadvertently make matters worse for me. He promised to be discreet. We reached the ship and climbed on board. I fled forrard on the instant, while he interviewed the old man. Whatever passed between them in their few minutes' talk, I don't know; I heard no more of the affair. But I was never again allowed on shore while I belonged to the *Arabella*. The mate came on board quietly and turned in, no word reaching us forrard of any trouble about his little flutter.

## *The Mutiny and After*

It must be confessed that during our stay in Demerara the fellows had a pretty good time of it. Since there were no stores on board of rope, paint, or canvas, the work was mainly confined to washing decks or scrubbing paintwork, a good deal of time also being wasted making sennit, *i.e.* plaiting rope-yarns for chafing-gear. What sailorizing was undertaken was in the nature of kill-time, and well understood as such by the men. Nevertheless they were by no means pleased with their easy times, for they had not yet been able to get any drink; their displeasure being heightened by the knowledge that the mate had been ashore and got a skinful. Any one versed in the ways of seamen should have known that mischief was brewing, even though no definite plan of action had yet been discussed. It only wanted a bottle or two of rum to fire the magazine.

At last liberty day drew nigh. The cargo was all out, the ballast all in, no cargo being obtainable for the crazy old *Arabella* in Demerara. I do not now even know whether it be a legal enactment that seamen shall be allowed twenty-four hours' freedom in foreign ports, with some portion of the wages due to them to spend, but if not, the custom is so well established that it has all the force of law. The men were like schoolboys at breaking-up time, half crazy with delight at the thought of the joys (?) that awaited them ashore. They received but a few shillings each, much to their disgust, because there was as yet little wages due to them, and no amount of begging or bullying could avail to get them any more. The mate's watch went first, among them my stout friend Joe, whom I tearfully begged not to get drunk and kick up a row, for my sake. Looking back I wonder at my temerity, for it must have been like getting between a tiger and a shin-bone; but he took it very meekly, and actually promised that he would come aboard sober. During their absence the ship was strangely quiet, very little work of any kind was done, and the waiting watch were as sulky as bears. Next morning about eight o'clock the revellers returned, all except Joe, in a bedraggled, maudlin condition that told eloquently of their enjoyment. Had it not been for Joe they would have all been in the lock-up, or 'chokey' as sailors invariably call it; but he had worked like a Trojan to keep them together and out of harm as much as possible. He had quite a triumphant air of unwonted virtue as I whispered my delight at seeing him again, and *sober*.

Then the starboard watch, with the doctor, took their innings, with strict injunctions not to be late the next morning, as we were going to unmoor and drop down stream a little in readiness for sailing. The day passed like the previous one, black Jem doing the doctor's work as well as he could with such assistance as I could give. The next morning at daylight preparations were made for unmooring, and at eight o'clock a pilot came on board, a smart-looking, sharp-featured Yankee who looked around the old hooker with undisguised contempt. Nine, ten o'clock, and no sign of the liberty men. The old man went ashore on business, leaving full instructions with the mate about unmooring, which he expected to be carried on in his absence. He had barely been gone half an hour when the starboard watch returned; but it was evident at once that they had their own views upon the unmooring question, which by no means coincided with the skipper's. They were all half-drunk and quarrelsome, especially the doctor, who strutted about more like a bloodthirsty pirate than an elderly spoiler of ships' provisions. Unfortunately, too, each man had brought with him a plentiful supply of rum, which they at once began to share with the port watch, all except Joe, who would have none of it. They even invited Mr. Svensen and Chips to partake, meeting their courteous refusal with quite gratuitous displays of bad language and ill-temper.

At last, the mate, mindful of the wiggling he might certainly expect on the skipper's return if no work was afoot, ventured to give the order, 'Man the windlass!' the pilot taking up his post on the forecastle. For all answer there came a howl of derisive laughter from the den, where all hands, with one exception, were busy 'freshening the nip.' Mr. Svensen wisely took no notice; but, in a cajoling tone, said, 'Now den, poys, gum along, mage a sdart; ics kedding lade, ju dond vant ter ked me indo a row, do jer?' Forth strode the truculent doctor, an uncanny figure, all asway with drunken rage. 'Looky hear, yew square-headed son of a bitch, yew ain't agoin' ter horder me about any more, so I tell yer! I ain't a goin' ter do another stroke aboard the rotten barge-built old bathin' masheen, so there!' (I suppress the every-other-word profanity throughout.) During the delivery of this speech he was wildly gesticulating and spluttering right up against the mate's breast, shaking his withered fists in the big man's face, and otherwise behaving like a very maniac. The rest of them gathered around, adding to the clamour; but the burden of all was the same, 'No more work, not another hand's-turn aboard this' (collection of all the abusive sea epithets known) 'old lobster-pot.' Joe, meanwhile, was calmly doing some trifling job aft, by the break of the poop on the starboard side. To him sauntered an Irishman,

hitherto one of his best friends, now laboriously polite and anxious to know whether he intended being a sneak, a white-livered etcetera and so forth. For all reply, Joe turned his back on him. I was cleaning knives on the same side forrard by the galley door, but not making much progress on account of so many distracting episodes taking place. The babel of abuse around the unfortunate mate was going strong all the time. A thrill of terror went through me as I saw the Irishman suddenly lift his hand and strike Joe on the back of the neck. He turned like a flash, shooting his right fist into Patsy's face, with a crash that laid him out, sounding horrible to me. Without a word Joe turned again to resume his work. Patsy gathered himself slowly up and staggered forward, bleeding profusely, and muttering disjointed blasphemy as he came. He passed me, going into the fo'lk'sle; but my attention was suddenly attracted by a yell of laughter from the other side of the deck. Peeping round the galley, I saw with amazement that the drunken devils had actually triced the poor mate up spread-eagle fashion in the main rigging, and were jeering him to their hearts' content. Then they made a rush for the cabin. Chips was nowhere to be seen. Presently they returned, bringing the ensign, which they proceeded to hoist in the rigging, Union down, a sea signal of the most urgent importance, denoting anything dreadful from fire to mutiny.

A step beside me made me turn, startled, to see who it was, and I just caught sight of the grim blood-besmeared visage of Patsy, who was stowing the long cabin carving-knife in the waistband of his pants. While I stared at him, breathlessly wondering what his little game might be, he broke suddenly into a run aft to where Joe still pursued his peaceful task, all undisturbed by the riot around. 'Look out, Joe,' I screamed, 'he's got the carving-knife!' The warning came only just in time; for as Joe turned sharply he met the raging Patsy at close quarters, aiming a savage stab at him. Naturally lifting his arm, he received the descending blade through the fleshy fore-part of it; but, with the other, he caught the Irishman by the throat, and jammed him back against the rail. Kicking the knife, which had dropped from the wound, far forward as he sprang, he plucked an iron belaying pin from its socket, and brought it down with a sickening thud upon Patsy's already battered face. Again he fell, this time to remain until dragged forward, a limp, disfigured lump.

By this time the inverted ensign had told its tale ashore, and a large canoe well-manned with negro policemen, under a white sergeant, was coming off to us at a spanking pace. This sight drew all the mutineers to the side, whence they could watch her approach, which they hailed with the liveliest expressions of joy. Chips now put in an appearance, looking very sheepish, and,

assisted by Joe, released the mate from his undignified suspension in the rigging. He tottered aft, looking very unwell, and muttering bitter reproaches on the carpenter for having abandoned him to such a fate. The police-canoe bumped against the side, her stalwart crew clambering on board like cats. While the officer hastened aft to hear the news from the mate, his myrmidons were amazed to find themselves hailed with delight by the excited crew, who fraternized with them as if they had come to convoy them to a picnic. The mate's tale being soon told, the sergeant of police gave orders to his men to arrest the mutineers, and, with joyful outcry, all hands hurried forward to prepare for their departure.

During the preparations, the pilot, the mate, and the police-officer foregathered on the poop to indulge in a smoke, and discuss the ways of scamen in general. But though their palayer lasted a long time, there was no sign from forrard. At last, his patience exhausted, the sergeant strode forward to the fo'lk'sle, demanding with many objurgations, the reason of this delay. To his rage and dismay he found that the supply of rum had been so plentiful, and had circulated so freely, that policemen and sailors were involved in one common debauch. Indeed it was hard to say which was the most drunken of the two gangs. Uproarious was the din, nearly every man shouting some fragment of song at the pitch of his lungs, or laughing insanely at the gorgeous fun of the whole affair. Back came the sergeant, almost speechless with anger and apprehension, for this no doubt meant dire disgrace to him. He was made worse, if anything, by the unstinted laughter with which the mate and pilot received the news. Small blame to them, the thing was so ludicrous.

Up went the police-flag again—to the main truck this time. In addition to this the sergeant hoisted a small weft at the peak, explaining sulkily that this was an urgent private signal for reinforcements. He added, 'An' all I hope is that the infernal scoundrels 'll fall out an' kill one another before my boss comes, or else I'm booked for a reduction in grade that'll dock me of a quarter of pay—none too much as it is.' Before many minutes had passed a large launch was seen approaching, rowed by fourteen men, who, unlike the first lot, were all white. With them came our old man, whose face was a study. I just caught one glimpse of it, and its fury scared me so that I dared not go near him. There was now no more fooling; in double quick time all the roysterers, policemen as well as sailors, were collected from the fo'lk'sle, handcuffs put on them, their effects flung into the launch, and themselves bundled after with scant ceremony. So rapid was the work that in less than ten minutes they were all on their way ashore, making the air resound with their discordant yells.

A painful quiet ensued. Joe and I, sole representatives of the foremast hands, leisurely cleared up the decks, after which he busied himself preparing a meal which should do duty for dinner and supper. The captain went ashore again, much to my relief, for while he was on board I couldn't get quit of the idea that in some way or other he would bring me in responsible for his disappointment, and take his consolation out of my poor little carcass. I had been so used to this vicarious sort of payment of old, that the idea was a fixed one with me whenever there was a row. In fact, I often feel the old sensation now. But to-day he seemed unable to give vent to his feelings, so nothing disturbed the calm of the afternoon. Joe informed me that he had gone ashore to ship a fresh crew, and that we should certainly sail in the morning, he having heard the old man tell the pilot as much when he took the dinner aft.

Sure enough, just before sunset the skipper returned, bringing with him a fresh crowd in place of the old hands, who had each, we were told, received summary sentence of two months' hard labour. Quick work, truly. The new crew were a mixed lot. There was a Newfoundland Irishman named Flynn, a fat-faced blubber-bodied fellow, who was for ever eating tobacco; a stalwart fiery-headed ex-man-o'-war's man who could only be called Ginger; a long, melancholy-looking Englishman, who signed as George Harris; a Eurasian of gentlemanly appearance, but most foul and filthy behaviour; a delicate pretty-faced, Liverpool Irishman, with a fair silky beard, for cook; a broad shouldered Greek, who had not a word of English; and, lastly, a precious piece of ornament in the shape of a Chinaman, pigtail and all, as if he had just come out of Foochow, whom the captain had shipped as steward for nothing a month. Gloomy Jem, the unfortunate negro youth, of course, remained of the old crew. In some misty fashion he went on his melancholy way, the butt of everybody but myself, his only relaxation an occasional incoherent chatter with me in some dark corner, when there was no work afoot.

Next morning at daybreak we unmoored, and proceeded down the muddy river, without hitch of any kind. The new crew worked well, glad enough, no doubt, to leave such miserable quarters as they had lately been enduring. You Sing, the Celestial, was a great acquisition. He was made to understand at once, that whatever work was to be done, he must take a hand in it, and he certainly toiled like a beaver. Beautiful weather still favoured us, and with an occasional glimpse of what looked to my exuberant fancy like fairyland rising out of the sparkling blue sea, we crept steadily westwards into the great gulf of Mexico. In spite of the miserable food and swinish fore-castle, the fresh crew worked well and peace-

ably. What growling they did was indulged in out of hearing, and, after late experiences, I hardly knew the old ship. Without a single incident worth recording, we rolled along until we sighted the Mexican coast, which, as the position of our first calling-place was somewhat vague, the captain proposed to skirt until he came to it. The weather now became less settled, squalls of considerable violence being frequent, making a great deal of sail-handling necessary. One night, when we were suddenly called upon to shorten sail in a deluge of rain, it happened that the long Englishman, George Harris, and Ginger, the quondam man-o'-war's man, found themselves together furling the main to'-gallant sail. Now, Ginger, though a big fellow, was, as usual with his class, of very little use at furling sail under merchant-ship conditions. Where one man is employed in the merchantman, six or seven crowd in on board of *Andrew*; and the 'blue-jacket' is consequently handicapped when he finds himself thus lonely. The sail was stiff with wet, the wind was high, and George, in trying to make up for Ginger's deficiency, ruptured himself badly. He got down from aloft somehow, and took to his bunk, a very sick man. The treatment he received only aggravated his mishap, while he grew rapidly weaker from his inability to eat the muck, which even in his case was unchanged. Although never very friendly with me, I was filled with pity for him, and actually so far forgot my dread of the terrible 'old man,' as to creep below and steal a few cabin biscuits, which were less coarse and whiter than ours. It was comparatively easy to evade the officers, and I chuckled greatly over my smartness, being richly rewarded by the gratitude of the invalid, who made quite a hearty meal of my plunder soaked with some sugar. But I reckoned without You Sing. That slit-eyed pagan in some unholy fashion found me out, and at once betrayed me to the skipper, of whom he stood in such awe, that he was ready to jump overboard at a nod from him. I was called aft, questioned, and found guilty. There and then, with a bight of the gaff-topsail halliards, he gave me such a dressing down as I have never forgotten, You Sing standing by with a face like a door-knocker for expressionless calm. Even amid my sharpest pangs I rejoice to think I didn't howl. Perhaps I gained little by that. At last the skipper flung me from him, saying grimly, 'Now ye can go an' thank George Harris for that.' And when, twenty years after, I saw that stern old man, reduced to earning a precarious living as a ship-keeper, fall from a ship's side in the Millwall Dock, injuring himself so frightfully that death would have been refreshment, I could not help thinking of the grist which is ground by the Mills of the Gods. Joe, my faithful ally, was furious when I went forward quivering with pain. He was for vengeance, first on the old man,



then on the placid pig who had betrayed me; but I begged so hard that he wouldn't make matters worse by interfering that at last he yielded. But he never settled down again satisfactorily.

Just a week afterwards we came to a slight indentation in the coast, where a Norwegian barque lay at anchor. From her we got the information that the place was called Tupilco, upon which we anchored, it being our port of call for orders. The anchor was no sooner down than Harris crawled aft and implored the captain to take him ashore so that he might get some medical aid. Desire of life made the poor fellow quite eloquent, but he might as well have appealed to a bronze joss. When, exhausted, he paused for breath, the old nian said, with bitter emphasis, 'Ef I'd ben a loafin' on my shipmets s'long's *you* hev', I'd take 'n heave me useless carcass overboard, ye wuthless sojer. Git forrard 'n die. It's 'bout the bes' thing you ken do.' George crept forrard again without a word.

We lay at this forsaken-looking spot for four days, holding no communication with the shore except twice, when a launch came off, manned by a truculent-looking crew of 'dagoes,' i.e. Greeks, Italians, Spaniards, and half-bred Mexicans. Soon after their second visit we weighed again, having received instructions to commence loading at Sant' Ana, some distance along the same coast. We had an easy run thither, with a fair wind all the way, and were pleasantly surprised to find that, although an open roadstead like Tupilco, there was quite a fleet of ships at anchor there. They were of all sizes and rigs, from rakish-looking Yankee schooners to huge full-rigged ships, and of several nationalities—British, American, and Norwegian predominating. There was a heavy landward swell on when we passed through them to our anchorage, and it was anything but cheering to see how they rolled and tumbled about in far more unpleasant fashion than as though they had been under way. In fact, some of the fore and afters had actually got staysails set, with the sheets hauled flat aft, so as to counteract in some measure the dangerous wallowing they were carrying on. I watched one Baltimore schooner, with tremendously taunt spars, roll until she scooped up the sea on either side with her bulwarks, the decks being all in a lather with the foaming seas tearing across them, and I couldn't help thinking what a heavenly time those Yanks must have been having down below, for there were none visible on deck.

*The Land of Liberty*

WE came to an anchor near the middle of the roadstead in seaman-like fashion, every sail being furled before the anchor was dropped, and the old tub brought-to as if going into dock. Then, as it was understood that our cargo was ready for us, preparations were immediately made for its reception. A stout spar was rigged across the forecastle, protruding twenty-five feet on the starboard side, with a big block lashed to its end through which ran a five-inch rope. A derrick was rigged over the main-hatch with a double chain purchase attached, and a powerful winch bolted to the deck, round which the chain revolved. Numbers of iron spikes (dogs), with rings in them, were fitted with tails of rope about three feet long, and lengths of hawser cut for 'mother-ropes.' The rafts of mahogany and cedar logs are made by driving a tailed 'dog' firmly into the side of each log a foot or so from the end. As each one is thus spiked it is secured by a 'tolling lutch' of the tail to the 'mother rope' (*cabo mudie* of the Spaniards), until as many are collected as required. This operation is always performed in the river just inside the bar, where the logs are sorted after their long drift from the interior. Then the raftsmen, who are equipped with capacious boats pulling six oars, and carrying about three hundred fathoms of grass rope, secure one end of their tow-line to the mother-rope, and pull away seaward in the direction of the ship, the steersman casting out line as they go. Arriving at the end of their tether they anchor, and all hands turn-to with a will to haul the raft up to the boat. This operation is repeated as often as is necessary to cover the three or four miles between ship and shore, until at last the long line of tumbling logs are brought alongside their destined vessel, and secured to the big spar on the forecastle. At whatever time they arrive all hands must turn out to receive them, and on board the American ships the uproar used to be fearful; oaths, yells, and showers of belaying pins rattling against the bulwarks, bearing eloquent testimony to the persuasive methods of discipline in vogue on board of them. The stevedores, or stowers of the timber, arrived on board shortly after we anchored; like the rest of the population, they were a mixed crowd of Latins and Greeks, but all speaking Spanish. Owing to their presence we fared much better than we should otherwise have done, for they were fed by the ship, and by no means to be offered any such carrion as usually fell to our lot. Their pay was high, five dollars a day; but they certainly worked well, besides being very

skilful. With our first raft there was trouble. Flynn, the 'blue-nose' Irishman, was sent upon the uncertain row of logs alongside to sling them; but after several narrow escapes from drowning or getting crushed between the rolling ponderous masses, some of them over five tons in weight, he clambered on deck again, and flatly refused to risk his bones any longer. Nor, in spite of the skipper's fury, could any other man be persuaded to attempt so dangerous a task. Finally, the old man turned to one of the Greeks of the stevedore gang, and ordered him to act as slingsman. 'Oah yez, capane,' said Antonio, 'sposa you giva me eight dolla day.' After a little more language the old man said, 'All right, 'Tonio, I'll give you eight dollars. An' I'll stop it out of your pay, you skulking sojer you' (to Flynn). Which was mirthful, seeing that eight dollars represented a fortnight's pay for our shipmate.

However, Antonio proved a most expert raftsman, being almost amphibious and smart as any eel. But the work was exceedingly severe. Lifting such great masses of timber tried the old sticks terribly, and when she rolled suddenly to windward, tearing the log out of water with a jerk, you almost expected her to fall apart. When, at last, the log showed above the rail, if she started her antics, all hands near stood by for a run, for the log would suddenly slue inboard, and come across the deck like a gigantic battering ram. The whole process was a series of hairbreath escapes. Down in the hold, where the stevedores toiled with tackles, rousing the logs about, there were many casualties; but these dagoes never seemed to care. For every hurt they had one remedy: plenty of 'caña,' a fiery white spirit, fresh from the still. Poured into a gash, or rubbed on a bruise, with half a pint to drink, this vitriolic stuff seemed to meet every emergency.

The enormous rate of pay prevailing here during the height of the season, had the inevitable effect of causing frequent desertions; so that as much as three hundred dollars was freely offered for the run to New York or Europe for seamen. Consequently a vigilant watch was kept by the officers of ships, lest any of the crew should take French leave, although getting ashore was difficult. We, however, had a very large long-boat, for which there was no room on deck, and, contrary to the usual practice it was put overboard, and kept astern at the end of a small hawser. The temptation was too much for my friend Joe, who, accompanied by the Eurasian, slipped over the bows one dark night, and swam aft to the unwieldy ark, unheard by the officer on watch. Poor fellow! he couldn't keep awake night and day. At daybreak, when the skipper came on deck, and looked over the taffrail, always his first move, the idle rope hung down disconsolately--the long-boat was gone! Seizing his glass he mounted to the cross-trees, and scanned the

horizon, discovering the derelict far out at sea. The gig was lowered and manned by Flynn and Jem, the skipper himself taking the tiller, and off they went in pursuit. It was nearly noon when they returned, towing the runaway, and half dead with thirst and fatigue. Then only did the skipper learn that two of his best men were gone. In his hurry he had not stayed to inquire, and now his rage knew no bounds. Judge, then, how he felt when he discovered, by the aid of his glass, that the deserters were no further away than our nearest neighbour, an American brig that lay less than half a mile away. Anger overcame his prudence, and he actually went alongside the Yank, intending to go on board and claim his men. He was received with contumely, the American skipper refusing to allow him over the rail. His state of mind on his return must have been pitiable; but he sought his cabin without a word, and remained there all the rest of the day.

In some way the news spread round the fleet, and that evening we were boarded by the captain of the *Panuca*, a Liverpool barque, who came to condole and relate his woeful experiences. He said that his men had refused duty altogether, upon which he was advised to take them ashore to the 'Commandant,' who would deal with them in summary fashion. Accordingly he took them, finding the *soi-disant* official to be a stalwart Greek, who held the position by virtue of his election by his fellow rascals, for law there was none. El Señor Commandante, however, told him to leave his men with him, and he would soon bring them to their bearings. Very reluctantly he followed this advice, since he had no choice, and returned on board, cursing his stupidity for ever taking them there. To his joyful surprise they returned on board, next morning, as meek in their demeanour as if they had, indeed, been taught a lesson. But two nights afterwards there was a desperate hubbub raised, during which the rascals looted the cabin, and, getting into the whale-boat hanging at the davits, went ashore with their plunder. They had strictly followed the instructions given them by the commandant, who made them a handsome present in return for the fine boat they brought him. When the half-frantic captain arrived on shore, and learned the truth, he was so enraged that he actually tried to take his boat off the beach where she lay, narrowly escaping being shot for his pains. This tale, poured into our skipper's sympathetic ears, somewhat reconciled him to his loss, since he still retained his boat.

But one disaster succeeded another. A curious malady of the feet attacked every one of the crew. It caused the legs and feet to swell enormously, and culminated in a suppurating wound horribly painful and slow to heal. Then a deadly encounter took place between the cook and You Sing, which was only settled by sending

the Chinaman ashore, since the two seemed bent upon murdering one another. Worst of all, when the ship was half-full, the timber ceased to arrive. Ship after ship sailed away, until there were only three of us left; and the season of the 'Norther's' being close upon us, when those destructive gales blow right home all along the coast, every one began to look very glum. The unfortunate invalid, George Harris, after lingering longer than any one could have believed possible, was set free from his misery at last, to the manifest relief of his shipmates, who were heartily tired of his taking so long to die. Sounds horrible, doesn't it? But it is the naked truth. Under such circumstances as ours were, the better part of humanity disappears, or only shines in individuals who are often, almost always, powerless to help.

Miserable as the time had been, it was not all lost upon me. As far as the hardship went it was no worse, if as bad, as I had endured in the London streets; and here, at any rate, it was always warm. I had learned to chatter Spanish fluently, although much of it I would gladly unlearn if it were possible, for I have always noticed that, in picking up a language colloquially, one learns easiest and remembers longest the vilenesses. And how vile the Latin tongues can be, few Englishmen can realize. I did not grow much, not being well-enough nourished; but I was wiry, hard as nails, and almost as brown as an Indian, being half naked from want of clothes. At last, one morning, my uncle sent for me. Although unconscious of any offence I was terribly frightened, but went, shaking with dread, to meet him. To my utter amazement he spoke kindly, saying that the ship was so old, and the season so late, that he feared there was great danger of her never reaching home. Therefore he had decided to send me on board the barque *Discoverer*, commanded by a friend of his, in which, as she was a splendid vessel, I should be far safer. She was to sail the next day, so I must go on board that night. I only said, 'Thank you, sir,' but volumes could not have expressed my gratitude. To leave this awful den, to be once more treated to a kind word occasionally—for, since Joe was gone and Jem had been driven ashore (which I have forgotten to mention), I had no friends at all on board; the prospect was too delightful for contemplation.

My wardrobe being on my back I was spared the labour of packing up. Farewells there were none to say, although, being naturally a tender-hearted little chap, I should have been glad of a parting God-speed. But no one said anything to me as I bundled into the boat and was rowed alongside my new home. As soon as I climbed on board I was met with a very chorus of welcome. The warmth of my reception amazed me, accustomed as I had been for so long to the miserable state of affairs on board my old ship. But

I soon overcame a strong temptation to cry for joy, and, steadily choking down the lump in my throat, set about taking stock of my new vessel. To my inexperience she seemed a most noble ship. Everything was on a much finer scale than anything I had yet seen in my brief travels. She had been built for the purpose of Arctic exploration, and consequently presented a somewhat clumsy appearance outside from the doubling of the bow planks and stern bends, and the diagonal oaken sheathing with which she was protected. Inboard, though, she was roomy, clear, and comfortable as could be imagined, while her rigging and spars were all of the very best, and in tip-top condition.

Quarters were assigned to me in the comfortable cabin of the steward, whose helper I was supposed to be, although, from the first, I had the free run of the ship fore and aft. Next morning we weighed with a gentle favouring breeze, homeward bound. But I soon discovered that there was one drawback to all this comfort—the captain was a confirmed drunkard. While the process of getting under way was going on, he was mooning about the deck with a fishy eye and an aimless amble, getting in everybody's way, and causing much confusion by giving ridiculous orders. Had he confined himself to that all would have been well, for the men humoured him good-temperedly, and took no notice of his rubbish. But when they had 'catted' the anchor, they were obliged to leave it hanging while they got some sail on her, the fall of the cat-tackle being stretched across the deck and belayed to the opposite rail, as there was no fo'lk'sle-head, and consequently no capstan. All hands being aft, the skipper maundered forrard, to find his further progress stopped by this rope. Muttering unintelligibly, he cast it off the pin to which it was belayed. The result staggered even himself, for there was a rush and a roar, a perfect blaze of sparks, a cloud of dust, and, with a jerk that almost threw everybody flat, the last link of one hundred and twenty fathoms of cable brought the ship up all standing. All hands had flown forrard at the first bang, but they were powerless to do anything except pray that the cable might part. It was too good for that, bearing the terrible strain to which it was subjected of bringing a ship up, in twenty fathoms of water, that was going nearly four knots an hour.

The mate got the old man aft into his cabin while the fellows clewed up the canvas again, and then issued the order to man the windlass once more. But this the men flatly refused to do, alleging that after their forenoon's work, it was unreasonable to expect such a thing. The mate was powerless to insist, so nothing further was done till next day but give the sails the loosest kind of a furl. At daybreak next morning the heavy task of getting the anchor was begun, the skipper keeping out of sight. There was a great

deal of growling and bad language; but the mate managed to get hold of a demijohn of the old man's whisky. This he dispensed with no niggard hand, and so the peace was kept; but it was late in the day when she was again fairly under way for home.

After that, everything went on smoothly enough. Although, as usual, the crew were of several nationalities, they all pulled together very well, nor did they take the advantage they might have done of the utter absence of any shadow of discipline on board. The whole working of the ship devolved upon the mate, for the skipper was always more or less drunk, and the second mate was helpless, having had his right foot smashed by a log of mahogany in loading. What work was necessary during the daytime was done cheerfully enough, and a general air of peace and contentment pervaded the ship. For one thing the food was really good and plentiful, and none of the men were of that blackguardly kind that glory in taking every advantage of any weakness aft. Of course the watch-keeping at night was bad. A big London boy, who was much disliked for his lazy, dirty habits, was made to keep the look-out always in his watch— a duty which he usually performed with his head between his knees. The rest of the men slept the night through, seldom knowing whose watch on deck it was; so that if sail required trimming all hands generally turned out to it after a good deal of inviting. The captain was supposed to keep the second mate's watch, but he set a shining example to his crew, by sleeping it out wherever he happened to drop when he came on deck.

I was very happy. Never since the time my troubles began, that is, at about eight years old, had I been treated so well. Being very small and fairly knowing, besides having a rather sweet treble voice, I was made a sort of plaything—an universal pet. And in the dog-watches, when seated upon the main hatch surrounded by the crew I warbled the songs I knew, while not another sound disturbed the balmy evening, but the murmur of the caressing waters alongside, and the gentle rustle of a half-drawing sail overhead, I felt as if my halcyon days had dawned at last. That fortnight is one of the pleasantest recollections of my life. The weather was delightfully fine, and by day the ship was like a huge aviary, a multitude of brilliant-hued little birds being continually about her, although we were out of sight of land. They were of many kinds, but all so tame that they freely came and went through cabin and forecastle, hunting for the cockroaches with which she was infested. On the upper yards a small colony of kestrels kept vigilant watch, descending like a flash upon any unwary birdling that dared to venture far into the open. The men made many nocturnal excursions aloft after the 'pirates,' as they called them, giving them short shrift when they caught them. So the days

drownsed on quietly and peacefully, seeming, to my youthful ignorance, as nearly perfection as they could possibly be. Not but what I felt an occasional twinge of sorrow at the continual drunkenness of the captain. Mixing with the men forrard freely as I did, their rough but half-pitying comments upon him and his behaviour could not fail to impress me, although I often wondered how it was that, being so well aware of the danger they ran by reason of such general neglect, they were not themselves more watchful, instead of taking such advantage as they did of the captain's fault, to sleep all night.

At last, on the fifteenth day from leaving port, on a clear starlit night with a gentle, fair wind blowing, and all hands, including the captain—whose watch it was—asleep, the vessel ran upon a coral reef and became a total wreck. Having told the story in another place, I cannot enlarge upon the circumstances attendant upon her loss here; it must suffice to say, after many perils, all hands escaped safely to land upon the 'cay' or sandy islet which crowned the highest point of the reef. A fairly large quantity of food and water was saved; so that we ran no risk of privation, even had the islet failed to furnish us with fish, fowl, and eggs in plenty as it did. One circumstance I must record in passing as being well worthy of notice. As soon as it was evident that the vessel was hopelessly lost, the seamen forrard, though perfectly well behaved, insisted that every drop of intoxicating liquor should be thrown overboard, and, in order that it should be done thoroughly, themselves carried it out. As the giant breakers destroyed the upper works of the ship, much useful wreckage came ashore, and one calm day a visit was paid to her, which was rewarded by the salvage of several sails and a quantity of cordage. With these, comfortable tents were rigged, and I have no doubt that, had it been necessary, we could have put in several months on that barren patch of sand quite happily. Huge turtle came ashore to deposit their eggs, and were easily caught. Sea-fowl of many kinds, principally boobies and frigate birds, swarmed in thousands, whose eggs, especially those of the frigate-birds, were delicious eating, although, never being pressed by hunger, we left their rank, fishy flesh severely alone. Fish of course abounded, while the crevices of the rocks concealed great numbers of clams and oysters, and at night the lighting of our beacon fire attracted quite a host of crabs from the sea, who fell victims in great numbers to their curiosity. Hardships there were none, and I would far rather have lived here for six months than for one week on board the old *Arabella*.

Ten days passed gaily away, during which the sail-maker and carpenter had made a fine seaworthy craft of the pinnace in which most of us reached the shore. Fitted with new sails and rigging and half-decked, she was fit for a much longer voyage than was neces-



sary to reach the mainland of Campèche, the nearest town of which, Sisal, was barely a hundred miles distant. But one morning as the look-out man was ascending the rocky promontory, where a flag-staff was erected to hoist the signal of distress we always kept flying by day, he saw a handsome barque lying to only about two or three miles away. The French ensign was flying at her peak, and a boat had left her side which was being rapidly pulled shorewards. They soon landed, and by expressive signs the officer in charge gave us to understand that he was prepared to take us all on board, but that we must make haste, as the vicinity was much too dangerous to linger in longer than was absolutely necessary. Not one word of each other's language did we understand, yet we found no difficulty in getting at one another's meaning sufficiently near for all practical purposes. To my amazement, however, the skipper, the mate, and four others, refused to avail themselves of the opportunity to escape. They said they did not want to go to Havana, where the barque would land us, preferring to sail in the pinnace to Sisal and take their chance there. When the French officer realized this, he looked as if he thought the small party refusing to come with him were mad. But after an outburst of volubility, quite wasted upon our misunderstanding, he shrugged his shoulders and retreated towards his boat, followed by all who were ready to go with him. His men had made good use of their time by getting a goodly quantity of birds and eggs collected, and now disposed themselves, with a perfect uproar of chattering, in as small a compass as they could, while our fellows took the oars and pulled away for the barque. Looking back, I saw the little group of our late shipmates standing watching us from the beach : a sight so pathetic that I could not help bursting into tears, quite forgetting that it was entirely in accordance with their own desires that they were thus abandoned.

We soon reached the ship, swarmed on board, and swung the boat up to the davits in a twinkling, while the officer who had brought us—the chief mate—held an animated colloquy with the captain on the poop. From the expressive gestures used, we had no doubt but that they were discussing the incomprehensible resolve of our captain and his followers. They terminated their conversation by mutual shoulder-shruggings, as who should say, 'But what would you, my friend? they are English, whose ways are past finding out.' Nothing could be more cordial than our reception by all hands. The big long-boat was cleared out for our sleeping-place, as the barque's folk'sle accommodation was too limited to admit any more than at present occupied it; and a bountiful meal of *fazhole blanc*, a delicious *purée* of haricot beans, good biscuit, and *vin ordinaire* was served out to us.

## *To Havana and After*

THIS seems to be an appropriate place for noticing how, at less cost, the Frenchmen fared so much better than in any sailing ship I have ever been in. The Board of Trade scale of provisions for the Mercantile Marine must strike every landsman as being a most absurd compilation. On four days of the week each man is entitled to one and a half pounds of salt beef, including bone, accompanied by half a pound of flour, except on Saturdays, when half a pint of rice *may* be given, or nothing. The other three days each bring one and a quarter pounds of salt pork and one-third of a pint of split peas. Every day there is an allowance *per capita* of one pound of bread (biscuit), an eighth of an ounce of tea, half an ounce of coffee, and three quarts of water; and each week twelve ounces of sugar and half a pint of vinegar is allowed per man.

What scope is there here for any variety or skill in cookery? Even supposing that the beef and pork were in any way comparable with the same articles on shore—which they cannot be in the nature of things—such a diet must soon become infernally monotonous. But the very best ship's beef and pork is not nice; the second best is nasty; and what will pass an inspector, is often utterly unfit for men to live upon entirely for any length of time, while it would be considered loathsome ashore. And what can be done with half a pound of flour? Lacking *anything* else, except a few hops, obviously the best thing to do is to make bread, which is a little more palatable than the flinty outrage on the name of food that is called ship's biscuit. What is usually done is to make 'duff.' This is really boiled bread, with the addition of some skimmed grease from the coppers in which the meat is boiled. As an act of grace but by no means of necessity, a pannikin (pint) of molasses is doled out for all hands on duff days, but the crew are not allowed to forget that they have no claim to this dainty by Act of Parliament.

On pork days pea-soup is made, or 'yellow broth,' as sailors call it. But pease and water with a flavouring of pork (not too much lest the soup become uneatable from salt) needs a stretch of courtesy to be called soup. A little, very little, addition of vegetables would make it palatable, but 'tis not i' the bond.' And even if so, do you think, reader, you would feel contented with fat pork and pea-soup for dinner three times a week for four months on end? For breakfast and supper (tea) there is biscuit and beef, or biscuit and pork, washed down with the result of the modicum of coffee or tea. And that is all. For very shame's sake, a minority of

shipowners do provide a few extras: such as butter, an occasional mess of tinned meat, and a few preserved potatoes and pickles. But these are the exception and *not* the rule. Moreover, whenever these additional helps are given, the men are always reminded that they have no right to them, that no owner need give anything more than the bare pound and pint of the Board of Trade scale.

Contrast this with our living on board the Bordeaux barque *Potosi*. In the first place the bread, which was in large puffy cakes, became, under the slightest moisture, as easy to eat and as palatable as baker's bread. This alone was an enormous boon. Breakfast, which, like all other meals, was taken by all hands at once, was hardly a meal in our sense of the term. It was only a cup of coffee (exceedingly good), some bread, and about a gill of cognac. Luncheon at noon consisted of half a pound of meat, free of bone, and some preparation of vegetables, bread, and half a pint of wine. Dinner at four p.m. was a grand affair. The changes were rung upon haricot beans, lentils, vermicelli, macaroni, and such legumes cooked with meat and flavoured so that the smell was intensely appetizing. Bread, and half pint of wine. And there was abundance, but no waste. Yet I am persuaded that the cost was much less than that of our authorized scale of provisions, about which it is difficult to speak with patience. It will, I think, be admitted that where men are shut up to a life of such monotony as the seaman's calling must necessarily be, their food ought at least to have some consideration. The meal-hours form almost the only breaks in the day's sameness, and if the food be poor in quality and without variety, it is bound to engender bad feeling and a hatred of those of whose fault it is the outcome. This by way of apology for such a lengthy dwelling upon the subject, if any be needed, though I have always felt that its importance is great enough to merit much more attention than it commonly receives.

We had a very pleasant passage. The barque was a wonderfully handy vessel, and her equipment was so good that it excited the wondering admiration of all our men. The discipline was quite naval in its character, and the day's duties went on with the regularity of clockwork. Of course we could not understand the language, and were, in consequence, unable to know whether there was the same amount of grumbling commentary forward, upon the sayings and doings of the officers, as is almost universal in British ships, with the exception of 'Blue-noses' (Canadian vessels). But it was admitted by all of us that the crew seemed well content and heartily willing, and that she was indeed a model ship. My scanty knowledge of Spanish came in useful, for the captain spoke that language about as well as I did. On his discovering this fact he sent for me, and, by dint of patience, succeeded in learning

from me such facts as he wished to know, rewarding me with many a tit-bit from his table, as well as some very useful gifts of clothing, which, as I was almost naked, were most acceptable.

Arriving at Havana, we were handed over to the British consul, leaving the friendly Frenchmen with much regret and three hearty cheers, which they returned with interest *à la Française*. We were no sooner clear of her than they began to get under way again, and; by the time we were on the wharf, she was once more heading for home. By the orders of the consul we were marched up to a 'fonda,' or eating house, facing the Plaza de Armas, which we understood was to be our home during our stay. A plentiful meal was set before us, but we did not appreciate it much, every dish being saturated with the flavour of garlic. But as two bottles of wine were apportioned to each individual, the meal was a merry one, all hands declaring that bread and wine would suit them down to the ground. A bundle of cigars were distributed by a benevolent-looking old stranger, who introduced himself as the shipping-master, and spoke excellent American, being, as he informed us, a native of New Orleans.

After a smoke, we were conducted to a large paved room at the back of the premises, which was simply furnished with a couple of huge tables and sundry benches, and had in one corner an unprotected well. Here we were told we must spread such bedding as we had, and make ourselves as comfortable as we could, until our proper dormitory was vacated by the recruiting party that at present occupied it. The said party were by no means an inviting crowd. They swarmed about the big bare chamber we were in, looking fit for any villainy, and ostentatiously displaying their vicious-looking bowie-knives. All our fellows had been deprived of their sheath-knives upon first coming ashore, under the plea that the carrying of weapons was unlawful, though we were the only unarmed people I saw in the city during my stay. However, we had no choice of quarters, so we proceeded to spread such ragged blankets as we possessed upon the flagstones against one of the bare walls, and in due time ranged ourselves thereon. Owing, I suppose, to the unusual quantity of wine they had drunk, all our men were soon asleep, and when some one took away the smoky kerosene lamp, the place was pitchy dark, except where the silver bars of moonlight, streaming through the unglazed holes in the walls, divided the blackness into rigid sections. I could not sleep. The novelty of the situation, the strange smells, and an indefinable fear of that truculent crowd of armed men, kept all my senses at highest tension. There was no door, and, through the opening in the wall, dark shapes of men came and went softly on Heaven knows what errands. I had reached a condition of mind when I

felt as if I must scream to relieve my pent-up feelings, when I saw some figures bending over my sleeping shipmates as if searching for something. By this time my eyes had become able to distinguish objects in the surrounding gloom, and I found that there were at least twenty men in the place.

Terribly frightened, and hardly knowing what I did, I roused the carpenter, by whose side I lay, and whispered hoarsely in his ear what I had seen. The word was passed along, and in a few minutes we were all afoot and straggling out into the moonlight-flooded courtyard. There we stood like a flock of startled sheep, irresolute what to do. But some of the knife-carrying gentry emerged after us, and began whetting their weapons on the blocks of stone laying about—portions of a ruined wall. This significant hint decided us, and we passed out into the silent street, feeling to the full that we were strangers in a strange land. Lights of any kind there were none, and the intense brilliance of the moon cast shadows as solid as does the electric glare. A few yards of uncertain wandering, and we were lost. There seemed to be no one about, and yet I could have sworn I saw dark shapes gliding along in the inky shadows. And presently I fell headlong over something in the road, my outstretched hands striking with a splash into a pool of mud. A cold thrill ran along my spine when I found I was lying across a corpse, and that the sticky paste on my hands was red. We quickened our steps after that, keeping in the middle of the streets, but as ignorant of our direction, or our purpose, as if we had been a herd of swine devoid of instinct. At last, from sheer weariness, we sat down upon the steps of some large building, and drooped our heads. As if he had risen from the ground, a 'vigilante' (watchman) appeared, bearing a short spear, from the upper third of which dangled a lantern. 'Vamos, perros!' he growled, prodding those nearest to him into instant wakefulness. No one needed a translation, or a second bidding to 'Begone, dogs!' So we tramped wearily along, our bare feet bruised by the littering stones. As often as we dropped for a brief rest, one of those ubiquitous *sereños* moved us on again to the same monotonous epithet of contempt. I often think what a queer-looking procession we must have been. My only garments were a flannel singlet and a pair of canvas trousers, so stiff that they creaked woodenly as I trotted along. Cap or boots I had none. The rest were in much the same plight, though none were quite so naked as me. Going along a narrow lane, whereof I read the title, 'Aguacallè,' on a building at the corner, I slipped off the hummocky sidewalk into a slough of soft slush up to my armpits, and was dragged out by my next friend with a new covering of such evil odour that I had to keep a respectful distance from my companions thenceforth. Finally we

emerged upon what seemed to be a wide common or piece of waste ground. Here at last we were permitted to squat unmolested. Fear of scorpions, centipedes, and snakes, kept me from sleep ; but all my companions lay sound in strange attitudes, under the full glare of the moon, while I watched, wondering if the night would ever end. At the first glimmer of dawn I aroused my companions, who were all reeking with dew, and we made for the streets again, going as straight back to our lodgings as if we knew the road. When we entered, the warriors had all gone. No one belonging to the establishment was astir, so we cast ourselves down on our rags and slept like stones until roused at eight o'clock by the servants. Until eleven we dozed on the benches, or in whatever corners we could find, when a plentiful breakfast revived us in spite of the garlic.

After our meal the vice-consul paid us a visit. He listened gravely to our complaints of the accommodation we had found. Then he invited us to accompany him to the consul's office. On our arrival all hands were shown into a large, bare room, while I was called upstairs to undergo a searching cross-examination by the consul as to what clothes the men had saved, the incidents of the shipwreck, etc. I suppose he thought that so young a boy would be more likely to tell a true tale than those artful rogues of sailors, as he seemed to regard them. He was not at all kind or sympathetic : that was no part of his business, I suppose ; but as he was writing an order upon a slop-seller for some clothing for us, a handsome young lieutenant from an English man-o'-war came in. His eyes fastened upon me at once, and, after a hurried question or two of the consul, he came to me and spoke pitifully, giving me two dollars out of his pocket as a solid token of his sympathy. Then the consul had all hands in and harangued them, telling them to be sure and keep sober (which, as they were penniless, was rather uncalled-for advice), and by no means to stray away from the immediate vicinity of the shipping-office. They would be sure to get a ship in a day or two, he said. Dismissing us with a curt good-day, he retired, while we followed the vice-consul to the clothier's. Here the men received each a rig-out of cheap garments, but I was treated much better : why, I do not know. After all the men had been served and had returned to our lodging, I was furnished with quite a nice suit of clothes, with good underclothing, patent leather shoes, and broad-brimmed Panama hat. A brilliant red silk sash was given me by the shopkeeper as a present, and, thus glorified, I felt quite transformed. With many cautions as to my behaviour, the official bade me good-day, and I was left to my own devices. And then began one of the strangest experiences of my life. Wherever I went, people looked kindly at me, and spoke to me as if they were interested in me. I entered into shop after shop to spend some of my money,

but found it impossible, for the shopkeepers insisted upon giving me what I asked for without payment, and often added to my store of cash besides. When at last I returned to the fonda, I was loaded with cigars, fruit, pastry, and all sorts of odds-and-ends, so that my shipmates were loud in their welcomes. By nightfall we were all in a very contented condition of mind, and, when the landlord politely requested me to inform my friends that our sleeping apartment was prepared, we felt that our comfort was complete. But our joy had a tremendous set-back when we were shown the said bedroom. It was a long lean-to shed erected against an ancient wall of rubble that had never known contact with a whitewash brush. The floor was of dried mud. Along the centre of its whole length ran an open ditch, which carried in a sluggish stream all the sewage of the house. On either side of this foul *cloaca* were ranged 'charpoys,' a sort of exaggerated camp-stool, which constituted the entire furnishing of this primitive bed-chamber. It was well ventilated, although there were no windows, for daylight was visible in many places through gaps in the boarding of the outer wall and roof. Many and vigorous were the comments passed upon the filthy hole, but there was no suggestion of raising any complaint, as all felt that it would be useless, and, at any rate, the place was our own, and we could barricade the door. So spreading our blankets upon the charpoys, we turned in, and were soon oblivious of all our surroundings.

Next day, in the course of my wanderings, I entered the fine billiard room of the Hotel St. Isabel and chummed up with the marker. I was well acquainted with the game, having learned how to mark in one of the strange bye-paths of my nomad life before going to sea. And this knowledge now came in usefully, for the marker was a one-armed man who was often sorely bothered by the management of his three tables, especially when the players were lively American and English skippers. I was made heartily welcome, being helpful, in a double sense, from my knowledge of Spanish as well as my acquaintance with the game. From that time forward the 'Fonda del buen gusto' saw little of me, and that little at uncertain intervals. I had a comfortable chamber, the best fare the hotel afforded, while as for money, the customers supplied me so liberally that my pockets were always full. As I could not spend it, most of it found its way to my shipmates, for I never came across one without handing some of it over. The idea of saving any never dawned upon me, and, when all my old shipmates were gone afloat again, I could always manage to find some English-speaking mariners to whom I was welcome company for a ramble round town.

The time flew by on golden wings. All my former miseries were

forgotten in my present luxurious life, and I blossomed into that hateful thing, an impudent boy uncontrolled by anybody, and possessing all the swagger and assurance of a man. Such as I was, however, I attracted the attention of a gentleman who held a most important post under government as a civil engineer. He was a fairly constant visitor at the hotel when in Havana, and our acquaintance ripened into a strong desire on his part to adopt me, and save me from the ruin he could see awaited me. His only son, a young man of three-and-twenty, was his assistant, the two being more like brothers than parent and child. Having made up his mind he fitted me out with an elegant suit of clothes made to his liking, and one day took me in his carriage to see the consul and arrange matters. To his intense surprise and disgust the consul flatly refused to sanction the affair, telling him that he was responsible for my return to England, and that, as I had admitted that my father was alive, any inquiry after me, which resulted in the discovery that I had been allowed to remain in Cuba without my parents' consent, would make matters very unpleasant for him. All attempts on Mr. D.'s part to shake this decision were fruitless. The consul refused to discuss the matter farther, and closed the conversation by warning me that I was liable to severe punishment for absenting myself so long from the home(?) where he had placed me. What I felt I cannot describe. Mr. D., with a deeply dejected face, bade me good-bye, his duties calling him into the interior next day. He gave me twenty-five dollars as a parting present, and advised me to get a ship as soon as possible for home. It may readily be imagined that I had no hankering after the sea again. The pleasant, aimless life I had been leading, the inordinate petting and luxury I had grown accustomed to, had made me look upon ship-life with unutterable loathing, and I secretly determined that if I could avoid it I would never go to sea any more.

About this time a terrible epidemic of yellow fever set in. So great was its virulence, that even the never-ending warfare between the royalists and insurgents slowed down, and instead of a ragged regiment of wastrels being despatched into the mountains about twice a week, the authorities were hard put to it to collect recruits at all. The great bell of the cathedral tolled unceasingly. All night long the rumble of the waggons over the uneven causeways sounded like subdued thunder, as they passed from house to house collecting the corpses of the victims. The harbour was crowded with vessels denuded of their crews, and from every masthead flew the hateful yellow flag. It was heart-breaking to see and hear the agony of the sailors being taken ashore to hospital. They knew full well that there was hardly a glimmer of hope that they would return. The Chinese, who acted as nurses, were destitute of any feeling of hu-



manity, and the doctors were worked to death. The nuns, who gave their lives nobly, could do little but minister such ghostly comfort as they knew how; but the new result of the hospital treatment was, with hardly an exception, death. Yet, in spite of the scourge, and general paralysis of trade in consequence, life, as far as I could see, went on much the same as ever. The inhabitants seemed determined to put a brave air on, whatever their inner feelings might be, and I declare that I saw very little to frighten me. One can get used to anything, especially when one has not learned to think. Several weeks passed away, and I was still free, though not quite so flush of money, for the customers at the hotel were necessarily fewer.

One day I was taking a stroll down by the deserted wharves, when I noticed a peculiar glow in the sky. It came from the heart of a gigantic cloud that draped half the heavens, and seemed as if it hid hell behind it. Fascinated by the sight, though my heart thumped furiously, I waited on the wharf and watched its development. The cloud spread until the whole dome was covered in by it, and the fierce glare took a strange greenish tinge. All around the edge of the darkness ran an incessant tangle of vari-coloured lightnings, and a continual rumble of thunder seemed to make the earth vibrate. Suddenly the storm burst. Jamming myself into a corner between some posts, whence I felt sure no wind could dislodge me, I waited and watched. For the first few minutes I thought I should have died of fright. Torrents of water, like the fall of a sea, were lashed into foam as they fell, and all torn into gleaming fragments by innumerable flashes flying in every conceivable direction. An overpowering smell like burning sulphur pervaded all. As for the wind, its force must have been frightful, judging from its effect upon the shipping and houses; but where I stood only a very strong gale could be felt, such as no seaman would think extraordinary. This lasted about an hour (but I cannot say much for time), and then the rain ceased. What a scene of horror the bay presented! Vessels of all kinds drifted aimlessly about, wrecking each other, and covering the boiling maelstrom of the harbour with their *débris*. Overhead a louder roar occasionally made me look up to catch sight of a flying roof like a cloud fragment fleeting through the murky air. A large Yankee schooner was torn from her anchors, and lifted on to a ledge beneath the Moro Castle, which jutted out of the perpendicular cliff about a hundred feet above high-water mark. There she remained upright, with her bottom stove in like Columbus's egg. Of all the vessels in the harbour, the only ones that survived without serious damage were the warships, which, with topmasts housed and cables veered out to the clinch, were all steaming full speed

ahead, and, even then, hardly easing the tremendous strain on the latter.

Taking advantage of a lull I emerged from my corner, drenched to the skin, of course, and so cramped from my long crookedness, that at first I could hardly feel my feet. As hurriedly as I could I made my way towards the hotel, finding the roadways almost blocked with ruins. The hotel had escaped much damage, and I was received with open arms, soon forgetting all my fears in a good meal and cheerful talk. In spite of the havoc it had made, the general feeling was one of thankfulness, it being taken for granted that the hurricane would be found to have swept away the far more dreaded 'Yellow Jack.' And this was literally true, for not a single fresh case was reported from that day forward. Business revived with a bound, for there was much work to do everywhere, shipwrights especially commanding almost any wages they liked to ask. About a week after the hurricane, I was standing watching the transport of a huge steam-launch over an isthmus to the dockyard, when I felt a hand on my shoulder. Turning sharply, I saw the yellow visage of the vice-consul, who was accompanied by a man in uniform, to whom he gave me in charge. I was fairly caught, and without further delay, in spite of my vehement protestations, I was put into a boat and taken on board a large barque, the *Sea Gem* of St. Andrews, N.S. The captain, a kindly looking old gentleman, heard my impudent remarks in amused silence, until he thought I had gone far enough. Then he stopped me with a quiet, 'That'll do, my lad, you don't want a rope's-ending, I'm sure.' I had not lost all sense, so I pocketed my grievance and crept sullenly forward.

### *Off to Sea again*

THE *Sea Gem* had suffered greatly from the hurricane, but, by dint of strenuous effort on the part of her agents, was now fairly seaworthy again. The ravages of pestilence, however, had left her almost unmanned, the only survivors being the second mate, the carpenter, and a couple of American negro youths. The new captain, I learned from the carpenter—who had taken me under his protection—had been retired for some years, occupying a fairly well-paid post ashore in Havana. But tempted by a lucrative offer from the agents, and greatly longing to return home again, he had accepted the post of master of the *Sea Gem*. He had succeeded in collecting another crew to take the vessel home; but they were, indeed, a motley crowd. Three Austrians, a Montenegrin, a Swede,

a Frenchman and two more negroes made up the complement forward, all of whom spoke a barbarous dialect of Spanish among themselves, although the Austrians also conversed indifferently in some Slav tongue as well as in Italian. There was as yet no chief mate, but another American negro had been secured for cook and steward.

No cargo being procurable, we were to proceed in ballast to Mobile for cotton, and thence home. I had not yet lost hope of being able to escape before sailing; and the carpenter, who seemed to be greatly amused by my company, rather encouraged me in the idea. Strangely enough, nobody seemed to trouble about me, and I foolishly sulked about all day, doing nothing but brood over the possibility of getting away. At last a chance presented itself. All the members of the new crew were taken ashore to the consul's office to sign articles, and I, of course, went along. I had still a good deal of money, and, as soon as I had signed, and been ordered by the captain to go down to the boat and await his coming, I demurely obeyed, and bolted in a contrary direction as soon as I had turned the street corner. I was free. True, I had an uneasy feeling that at any moment I might be arrested for desertion; but I refused to entertain it, and hurried up town to the Hotel St. Isabel. Here I got a shock. My old friend the billiard marker was gone, and the new man did not look upon me at all favourably. My other acquaintances in the hotel, too, appeared anxious to avoid me, as if they had been warned not to give me harbourage there. So I wandered forth disconsolately, feeling as if the place was quite strange to me. In the course of a long ramble I fell in with a young American seaman who was outward bound, *i.e.* hard up, but as full of fun as if he had just been paid off. We had a great time together for a couple of days, getting as far away as Matanzas, and using up my stock of dollars at an alarming rate. The third day we were a bit weary of skylarking about, and decided to return to his boarding-house and have a good night's rest. When we arrived there it was past closing time, and the place was all dark and silent. It was a big corner building, springing straight from the roadway, with flat walls, up to a height of about fourteen feet, where a balcony ran right round the building. To rouse the landlord was more than we dared; so, after much scheming, we managed to find a light cart under a shed, which we dragged from its place and up-ended under the balcony. My chum, who was very tall, climbed up the shafts and scaled the balcony, then lowered his long sash to me. I was speedily by his side, and together we sought and found his room, which opened on to the balcony and was luckily unoccupied. Feeling secure, our love of fun overcame weariness, and after a boisterous pillow-fight we strolled out

on to the balcony again. Just then a sereño loitered round the corner and uplifted his voice, 'Ave Maria purissima, sin pecado concebida. Doce hora ; noche sereña !' As the echoes died away, he caught sight of the cart standing where it ought not, and proceeded to investigate. Moved by the same spirit of mischief, we hurried to the chamber, and found a big jug of water, which Zeke carefully poured upon the head of the muttering vigilante. The effect was amazing. Raving like a lunatic, he assaulted the great door with feet and spear-butt, making an uproar that speedily aroused everybody within earshot. Our house hummed like a hive, and, before many minutes, we heard the hurried tramp of feet along the uncarpeted corridors, and the babel of many voices—the drenched official's shrilly predominant. Presently they entered our room, to find us just awaking from a sound sleep! and blinking at the lanterns like owls. So deep had been our slumbers, that it was some time before Zeke could explain how I came to be there; but the landlord, whom I recognized as an old acquaintance, was quite easily satisfied about me. Clearly we were not the offenders, and the search-party passed along, leaving us to enjoy a frantic jig at the glorious disturbance we had aroused. How the affair was settled I never heard, for the next day was my last of liberty.

Zeke went down to the shipping-office to look for a ship in the morning, leaving me to my own devices. After an hour's ramble up town, I began to feel a miserable reaction, helped on doubtless by the fact that I had shared my last dollar with my chum, and couldn't for the life of me see where any more were coming from. Presently I turned into a café and called for a cup of coffee (I had not learned to drink anything stronger). While I sat moodily sipping it, a drunken, disreputable-looking man of about forty, roused himself from one of the tables, and, coming over to where I was, addressed me in broad Scotch. With maudlin tears he assured me that he was the chief mate of the *Sea Gem*, and that he must get on board that day, but how he did not know. He dared not go out for fear of being arrested; would I take pity on him, and see him on board? He must have been in a queer state of mind, for I was but a boy of thirteen and small for my age. My pride was touched, and I readily assented, leading him carefully down to the wharf, and engaging a boat for him. There I would have left him, but he held on to me like a bear, swearing he would be lost and undone without me, so I had to go off with him. When we got alongside, the second mate appeared at the gangway, and lowered a bowline, which I slipped over the helpless creature's head and under his arms. Thus he was hauled on board like a sack of flour. Then the second mate sternly ordered me to come up. I refused. But he quietly said, 'Well, then, I must come and

fetch you.' That was sufficient; I mounted the side, and said good-bye to Havana.

That a rope's-ending awaited me, I felt sure; but instead of that, the captain called me into his cabin, and gave me a most fatherly talking to. His kindness made me feel bad, and I promised him forthwith to be a good boy, and forget my vagabond, independent way of living ashore. Patting me on the head, he dismissed me to make my peace with the second mate, who was very angry with me indeed. He received my apologies in silence, and, although never friendly, I had no cause to complain of his treatment afterwards. Of the mate I saw nothing for two or three days, for, although we left Havana the next morning, he was in such a woeful condition, after his long debauch, that he could not leave his berth. When he did appear he seemed to have forgotten who I was. His manner to me was extremely brutal; in fact, he was a brute all round—although a lively regard for his own skin made him careful how he treated the curious crowd of 'dagoes' forward. They were not at all a bad lot, and, considering their limited vocabulary, got on fairly well with the work of the ship. The little Frenchman, in particular, was like a bundle of watch-springs. When he once comprehended an order, it was delightful to see him execute it. But his desperate attempts to understand what was said were quite pathetic. He spoke a mixture of Spanish and French, which the others did not well understand; and at last he pitched upon me as the only one he could hold anything like a conversation with, though how we managed it I have now no idea.

Everybody liked the old man. He was so genial, so simple, that it was a pleasure to see him. But I am afraid he would have had a bad time of it with a crew of Britishers. They appreciate a tight hand, and are quick to take advantage of anything like easy-going on the part of their officers. This polyglot crowd, however, gave no trouble; and, in spite of the bungling stupidity of the mate, who never seemed to get quite clear of the after-effects of his big drunk, things went on oiled wheels.

We were drawing near our port, when one afternoon, during a fine wholesail breeze, there was a sudden gloom which rapidly overspread the sky. Somebody was keeping a bad look-out, doubtless, for before any sail could be reduced, a squall of wind and hail struck the vessel, throwing her on her beam ends. It was so sudden that, although all halliards and sheets were let fly at once, not a yard would come down, the ship lying over at too great an angle. And above the roaring of the wind, and the flapping of the flying canvas, the ominous rumble of the stone ballast rattling down to leeward could be plainly heard. The deck was like the wall of a house, and, when I saw the foaming sea rising up on the leeward

as high as the hatches, I felt sure she was turning bottom up. By God's mercy, we had an old suit of sails bent, which the wind stripped from the yards and stays like muslin. Great sheets of canvas flitted away into the darkness to leeward, while the flying running-gear cracked like volleys of musketry. Gradually as the pressure weakened she righted, regaining as even a keel as the shifted ballast would allow, and we were safe. But there were many pale faces besides mine, the old captain especially looking terribly shaken up.

Every stitch of canvas that had been set when the squall burst was gone, and, as the weather gradually settled into a strong gale, there was a desperate night's work ahead. In our position, with a great deal of land about, it was imperatively necessary to get sail set; but before that could be done it had to be 'bent,' that is, secured to the yards. Such a task as this tests the capabilities of a crew very well. In a man-of-war, where they can send a man to every roband, and a couple to each earring, the job is fairly easy; but in a merchant-ship it means almost superhuman labour, from the scarcity of hands. I shall not attempt to describe the process, which bristles with technical details, that cannot be grasped without a corresponding idea of the conditions of work aloft in bad weather. Suffice it to say that by midnight the two lower topsails, foresail, and fore-topmast staysail were set, and the hands, thoroughly exhausted, allowed to rest a while. It was my first experience of bad weather at sea, and I thought regretfully of the ease and comfort of my late life. But a kind of philosophic determination not to cry over spilt milk, which has attended me all my life, came to my rescue, and prevented me from being too miserable.

The poor old captain, however, was severely tried. Evidently his fortitude and ability were less than he had imagined. He looked worn and decrepit, a settled anxiety gave him a haggard appearance, and all hands pitied him. The fine weather had entirely forsaken us, nothing but fierce squalls and incessantly shifting winds prevailing until we made Dog Island, at the entrance to Mobile Bay, under the lee of which we came to an anchor. Our troubles were even then not over, for a gale sprang up almost immediately, which raised so ugly a sea that the lively vessel almost plunged bows under. All hands but the captain and myself were aloft, furling the sails forward. I stood alone by the windlass, ready to slack or make fast such running-gear as I was called upon to look after, when, with a tremendous bound, the ship reared herself high in air forrard, snapping the sorely-tried cable, the released links of which flew aft over the windlass-barrel with a deafening crash and shower of sparks. Everything was at once

dropped aloft, the hands came sliding down backstays at their best gait, and in less than five minutes the other anchor was let go. Cable was veered away to ninety fathoms, and fervent hopes expressed that she would hold, for night was almost upon us, and our position was dangerous in the extreme. Happily the wind hauled soon after, the sea became smooth, and we rode in comparative comfort till noon next day, when a powerful tug came down and towed us up among the shipping to a secure berth.

A fine fleet of ships lay here, all loading cotton for Liverpool. Nor, in spite of the number of vessels, was there any delay in commencing our cargo, for the next day, after mooring, a gang of stevedores came on board and set to work, with characteristic American energy, to prepare the hold. Our captain left us for Mobile City in the same steamer that brought them, returning with the first load of cotton, but only to bid us farewell. He called us all aft, and, with a quivering lip, informed us that he did not feel equal to taking the ship home. Therefore he had determined to make way for a better man, who would be with us in a few days. He thanked all hands for the way they had treated him, and then, shaking hands all round, got into the boat and was rowed away to an upward-bound steamer, which lay alongside our nearest neighbour, the *Mary Durkee*. A hearty cheer followed him, which, if it lacked the simultaneous volume peculiar to Britons, was certainly no less sincere.

Then the cotton began to come in. The great loosely pressed bales, weighing some six hundredweight each, were whipped on board like magic by a single-purchase steam-winch on board the steamer, and tumbled into the hold as fast as they came. Below, operations commenced by laying a single tier of bales, side by side across the ship, on the levelled ballast, leaving sufficient space in the middle of the tier to adjust a jack-screw. Then, to a grunting chantey, the screw was extended to its full length, and another bale inserted. The process was repeated until at last long wooden levers were attached to the iron bars of the screw, and the whole gang 'tallied' on until the last possible bale was squeezed into the tier, which was then almost as solid as a beam of timber built into the ship. It was a point of honour among stevedores to jam as many bales into a ship as she could possibly be made to contain, and restraint was often needed to prevent the energetic workers from seriously injuring vessels by the displacement of deck-planks, stanchions, bulkheads, and even beams.

On deck there was much to do. A winter passage across the Atlantic was before us. The vessel had been greatly neglected in Havana, and a great deal of sail-making had to be done. The mate, having obtained a demijohn of 'bug-juice' from one of the cotton-

steamers, was constantly drunk; so all the work devolved upon the austere second mate, who toiled early and late to keep matters in hand. Owing to the docility of the crew, this was possible; but he was greatly relieved when one fine morning a tall, determined-looking man with a sallow face, heavy black moustache, and nasal twang arrived on board, and announced himself as 'Captain Jones, come to take command.' Within half an hour of his arrival, he had been all over the ship, had interviewed every member of the crew, and had repeated at least a dozen times that he was a 'down Easter,' and proposed to 'run this packet Yankee fashion.' With an intuition I have always had, I determined at once that he was carrying a good cargo of liquor; and it was as well for the besotted chief mate that this was so, for he would not otherwise have been so friendly with him, I'm sure. His rounds completed, he retired to the 'saloon,' catching sight of me as he went, and appointing me cabin-boy on the spot. My first duty was to call the mate into his presence. There and then the two of them, seated *vis-a-vis*, began to drink themselves speechless, while I stood in attendance, filling up their glasses until they could no longer hold them. At last they rolled off their seats, and lay across one another insensible. I retired and informed the steward, who lifted his hands despairingly, exclaiming, 'Fo' de good Lawd, dis gwine ter be ole hell erfloot. One on 'em's bad nuff, but skipper en mate bofe: wa' we gwine ter do I doan know.' But Captain Jones' carouse only lasted a couple of days. At the expiration of that time he 'sobered up,' and, though looking very demoralized, went about the ship like a man that knew his business thoroughly and meant doing it. Strangely enough, he allowed the mate to go on as he had been doing, never interfering with him in any way.

When two-thirds of our cargo was in, Captain Jones went up to the city again. During his absence the stevedores quitted work and left us for the Christmas holidays. By Christmas Eve there was not a steamer left in the bay, and an aching sense of discontent manifested itself all through the fleet. Not to speak of any festive provision, there was an actual dearth of fresh stores of any kind, as no vessels had been down for several days. Boats came and went from ship to ship on the same errand, seeking wherewithal to make a Christmas dinner; but there was no hope, all were alike unprovided. Gloom sat on every face as the prospect of a salt-junk dinner on Christmas Day grew more definite, and the language used about the matter was altogether improper and unseasonable. But, just as dusk was stealing in, a solitary schooner was sighted coming into the bay from the river under a press of canvas, which, in spite of the light breeze prevailing, drove her along at a good pace. It was quite dark by the time she reached us, and much to



our surprise dropped her anchor close aboard of us. As soon as she swung to the wind the voice of Captain Jones hailed us from her deck, crying, 'Send a boat aboard!' He had no sooner spoken than a perfect chorus arose about him: the squealing of swine, the cackling of geese, and the shrill war-cry of turkeys. Blessed discord! filling us with visions of feasting too delightful for speech. There was no delay in getting the boat afloat, all hands being full of eagerness to assist.

After receiving the skipper, the boat made a tour of the anchorage, Captain Jones standing up as each ship was passed, and shouting the good news at the top of his voice. Then returning to the schooner, the boatmen laboured like Trojans to transfer the stock to our deck. Besides the poultry and pigs, there was a huge pile of fresh beef, vegetables, and enough drinkables to furnish a carouse for the combined crews of the whole fleet. The transshipment was barely completed when customers began to arrive. Soon we were the centre of a flotilla of boats, whose crews lined our rails while the skippers examined the provisions. All the lamps in the ship were lighted and hung about, and, a rostrum being erected, Captain Jones began his auction. It was the strangest scene I ever witnessed on board ship. Roars of laughter punctuated every remark of the auctioneer, and, assisted by swiftly circulating bottles of strong waters, the fun raged furiously until long past midnight. Then, as the last of the visitors departed uproariously, our excited crowd quickly calmed down, and quiet reigned until a late hour on Christmas morning. Of the subsequent feast there is no need to speak. Sufficient to say that it laid over all my experiences on board ship, for our skipper, having cleared a goodly sum by his 'cuteness' and enterprise, could well afford to be generous; and he was.

Four or five days elapsed before our stevedores returned, and the work of shipping cargo re-commenced. But once they got to work again no more time was lost. A week more saw every crevice, wherein it was possible to jam, by the most violent means, a bale of cotton, utilized, and even then the skipper growled because the time of year made it impossible for him to risk carrying a few bales on deck. At last the day came on which Captain Jones was to make his last journey to town to clear the ship for sea. Before he went, he called all hands aft and offered to buy such clothing as they required for the homeward passage. Being almost destitute of 'dunnage,' I ventured to put in my plea for a little, but was grievously disappointed. He would not buy me a rag, telling me that I was not a wage-earner but a passenger, and he couldn't afford to spend money out of his own pocket. Two days after we weighed for home.

We had fairly good weather as we were swept through the tortuous Florida Straits by the rush of the Gulf Stream, which, whether you will or not, carries you to the north-east at the rate of a hundred miles in twenty-four hours. But we were hardly clear of the land before a fierce north-westerly gale came howling down upon us, and my sufferings commenced in real earnest. For although I was supposed to be cabin-boy, I had to be on deck almost as much as I was in the cabin. The mate seemed to take a curious sort of pleasure in hazing me about, as if he had some personal grudge against me, although I never could understand why. I was so bitterly cold-footed that I stole a pair of the captain's stockings—I had nothing but a pair of patent-leather shoes—for foot-wear. They (the stockings) were very old, and I soon wore out the feet, which I cut off at the ankles, sewed up the openings, and put them on again. This ingenuity led to disaster, for springing up on the after-house one day by the side of the captain, who was leaning against it, he saw his initials on my leg. Investigation followed, in which I pleaded my sufferings from cold and his refusal to get me anything to wear in Mobile. My excuse was, of course, unacceptable, and, although he did not beat me, I was forbidden the cabin precincts any more, and compelled to go barefoot for the remainder of the passage. I was now in the mate's watch, and that worthy treated me with studied brutality. I scarcely ever came within reach of him but I got a kick—he seldom struck me with his hands.

As we got farther to the eastward the weather grew worse and worse. Gale succeeded gale with hardly a lull between, but our vessel being in such fine trim, we were decidedly better off than as if she had been deep in the water. At last, however, we fell in with a regular hurricane. Every stitch of canvas was taken in but a storm-staysail, made of the heaviest canvas woven, under which we lay-to until she gave a tremendous weather-lurch, and, rolling to leeward with a vicious jerk, the triangular patch of sail blew clean out of its bolt-ropes. From that time we lay under bare poles for eighteen hours, during much of which I sat on the poop beside the tiller, hauling back the slack of the wheel-ropes, more dead than alive from the wet and cold. Never having seen such a storm at sea before, I was dreadfully frightened, until I saw how unconcernedly the sea-birds hovered about us. Then I reasoned that if those tiny things were so secure, surely a big ship like ours must be much more so. Unsound as my conclusion was, it comforted me, and I had no more fear. A few days of light fine weather succeeded this storm, during which everything was made shipshape again aloft. The captain was a prime seaman, and, having completely left off his drinking, managed everything in first-rate style.

But he never forgave me for my theft, nor did he ever check the mate for his ill-usage of me.

One lovely afternoon, to the surprise of all hands, the order was given to shorten sail. There was not a cloud in the sky, and a gentle south-westerly breeze was wafting us along about four knots an hour. But, as the work of furling the upper canvas proceeded, the rumour went round that the 'glass,' as seamen always term the barometer, was falling very fast. It may have been, but for the twenty-four hours we lay under lower topsails and courses, not a trace of change in the serene weather prevailing. In the first watch of the next night there stole over the sky a gloomy shade, which deepened until the heavens were black. Not black as night, or black as ink, but as if a pall of black velvet had been suspended over the sea, scarcely higher than the mastheads. The wind died completely away. The water was smooth as oil, and so still that not a creaking rope or rattling sheave disturbed the death-like silence. When the look-out man struck four bells, the sound seemed to wound like a sword-cut, so sharp and unnatural was its clangour. This state of things lasted for about three hours. Then, gradually, tiny threads of light ran waveringly in every direction, as if the solemn dome of darkness above was cracking, and revealing an immense glow above it. The brilliant crevices widened, grew longer and more vivid, until the whole firmament was aglow with flashes of intensest light, while all our spars were outlined in lambent flame. This display lasted for about an hour, then faded away; the gloom disappeared, and the deep blue sky, studded with innumerable stars and unflecked by a single cloud, extended from horizon to horizon. This beautiful weather lasted for another twenty-four hours, and then a gentle westerly breeze sprang up, which gradually freshened, until we were flying along homeward at tremendous speed, carrying every stitch of canvas the ship could stagger under.

Meanwhile the mate's treatment of me got worse, until one night he dealt me a savage kick, which hurled me off the poop on to the main deck, where I lay insensible for some time. Although no bones were broken, I had received such severe injury that I was unable to walk for two days. During my confinement I made a desperate resolution, and, as soon as I resumed work again, carried it into effect by boldly approaching my merciless tyrant, and telling him that I was a consul's passenger, as he very well knew. I promised him that if there was any law that could reach him, I would endeavour to have him punished for his cruelty. And now I said, 'You can kill me if you like, I don't care.' Much to my surprise, he weakened at once, and for the remainder of the voyage I was freed from his cowardly attacks.

The brave westerly wind that was hurling us homeward acted as usual. That is to say it strengthened until, slowly and reluctantly, sail was reduced to the two lower topsails and reefed foresail. The ship was so buoyant that the mountainous seas which surrounded her, and often rose upon either side to such a height as to make it appear as if we were racing through a deep green valley, never broke on board. But the skilful, courageous steering required could only be performed by a few selected members of the crew. Several men had to be suddenly relieved of the task, for their nerve failed them at sight of the mighty green walls soaring above their heads, and they were within an ace of letting her broach-to. This terrible calamity, which has been the end of so many fine ships, occurs when the vessel swings broadside on to a great sea, which either smashes her up or rolls her over. In the most favourable cases much damage is bound to follow. We saw one sorrowful instance of it in a brig, which we flew by, helpless to aid. She was just sinking, the doomed crew clinging to the weather rigging as if to put off their inevitable fate for a few fleeting minutes. A huge sea rose between us, hiding her from view, and when we soared on the crest of the next one, she was gone like a foam flake.

Thus we ran until the colour of the water told us we were nearing the land, and soon we saw through the flying spindrift the lonely outpost of the Fastnet rock, with its sturdy lighthouse, which looked to me like a beckoning finger. Then mist-wreaths and snow-squalls shut out everything from view, except a barque, which, apparently going to Liverpool like ourselves, kept steadily on about a mile in front of us. So exactly did we keep in her wake that it looked as if we were following her lead. The weather got thicker, but the gale was unabated, and still we flew before it. Suddenly we were all startled by the report of a gun, and out of the fog on the starboard bow loomed the figure of a lightship with three ball-crowned masts. Our leader had disappeared. As we passed the lightship she fired another gun, and a lift in the fog showed the name on her side—*Coningbeg*. Still we kept on, all hands watching the skipper's troubled face. But a sudden roar of 'Breakers right ahead!' sent all hands flying to the braces. Hard down went the helm, and round came the ship on her heel, the spray from the heavy following sea flying high over our topsail-yards, while the tender vessel heeled over until the lee rail was under water. Not a moment too soon, for the furious roar of the baffled breakers sounded deafeningly, as their fleecy crests boiled and foamed under our lee only half a dozen cables-length away. Slowly, slowly we clawed off that ugly reef. For more than an hour the issue was in gravest doubt; then hope began to revive as the good ship's weatherly qualities became manifest, and it was plain

to all that we were drawing clear. The breeze now began to take off a bit, and more sail was made. Without any further incident, we ran steadily up-channel to Point Lynas, where we got a pilot and a tug, which by daylight brought us safely to an anchorage in the Mersey. We only anchored for an hour or two, waiting for high water, when we were coaxed into the Brunswick Dock, and made solidly fast on the side next the street. As soon as ever I could do so unobserved, I slipped down a fender lanyard and touched England with my feet, feeling a delightful thrill as I did so. Why, I did not know, but the fact remains. A homeless, friendless waif, with no prospects before me, no one to welcome me, I rejoiced to be in England again, as if I, too, felt it good to be at home.

8

*Struggles in Liverpool and London*

IN a very short time all hands had left the ship but myself. A decrepit old man arrived from somewhere to act as watchman; but he took no notice of me, and I made no advances. Not a word had been said to me by anybody when they left the ship, and I was greatly in doubt as to whether I was supposed to clear out like everybody else. But I was very sure that I did not know where to go, and so I coiled myself up in my bunk and went to sleep, as it was getting late. When I woke it was morning. A heavy fall of snow had covered everything during the night, and the outlook was as desolate and dreary as could be imagined. Making my way aft, I found the cabin all locked up; so that, though I was ravenously hungry, there was no chance of getting anything to eat. The ancient watchman was fast asleep in the galley, into which I stole to warm my freezing bare feet. As soon as I got the chill out of my bones I returned to the fo'lk'sle, and found, to my delight, an old pair of boots that one of the chaps had discarded. With these and some rags I covered my aching feet, and then, mounting on the rail, looked long and cagerly shorewards. Presently I made out, over the window of a small shop, the legend, 'Brunswick Dock Eating-house,' and noted with satisfaction a feather of smoke curling from one of the chimneys belonging to the building. Hardly stopping to think, I slipped down a rope and ran across the road, knocking boldly at the door. A ruddy-faced little girl about my own age opened it, and said, hesitatingly, 'What d'you want?' Trying to look big, I said, 'I'm a sailor belonging to that ship there, an' I want to come an' lodge here till I'm paid off.' With a doubtful glance at my beggarly outfit, she said, 'I'll go and call

aunty,' and ran off upstairs. There was a glorious fire roaring in a great open fireplace at the end of the low flagged room, so, without waiting permission, I entered, and seated myself on a bench close to the bright blaze. In a few minutes a sharp, business-like woman came down. In response to her keen questions I told my story, carefully avoiding any reference to my 'passenger' status on board. Apparently she was satisfied, for in a very short time I was supplied with such a breakfast as had long haunted my hungry dreams. Rashers of toasted bacon, boiled eggs, new bread-and-butter, fragrant coffee—it was just heavenly. All my miseries were forgotten in present joys, and I ate and ate until, suddenly looking up, I saw the little girl gazing at me with awe. No wonder she was astonished. The way I was demolishing the food was a sight to see. But, meeting my eye, she blushed crimson, and gabbled something in a strange tongue (which I afterwards learned was Welsh) to her aunt, who stood also looking at me with a good-humoured smile on her face.

Being warmed and fed, two satisfactory experiences to which I had long been a stranger, I was in no hurry to leave such comfortable quarters for the bleak outer world. But during the morning I ran over to the ship, and finding there the cook, I learned that she was to be paid off the next day. I determined to present myself with the rest at the shipping-office, although my hopes of getting any money were very faint. Still I knew enough of the world to be certain that, without money, I should not be allowed to remain at my present lodgings. So at the appointed hour I marched up to the Sailors' Home, meeting with a cordial welcome from my shipmates, especially the little Frenchman. Better still, as each of them received their money, they very kindly gave me a little, the total amount thus contributed being twenty-two shillings. Then came my turn to appear at the pay table. My heart beat fast with apprehension as I faced Captain Jones, my head only just appearing above the counter. His words were gruff and his manner unkind, but I believe he was moved with pity for my forlorn position, for he actually gave me two pounds ten shillings, pay at the rate of one pound a month. I was so glad that I knew not what to say, but I hastily retreated lest he should change his mind and take the money away again. As fast as my legs would carry me, I ran back to the boarding-house to exhibit my wealth to the landlady. I had never had so much money of my own before, and was proportionately elated, the thought of how much I needed it never entering my head. The landlady immediately suggested that I should treat her and her cory from next door, who was in conversation with her, at which proposition I felt quite a man, and inquired loftily what the ladies would take. A little drop of

'Donovans' appeared to be the favourite liquor, a totally unknown beverage to me, but I should have agreed had it been champagne. The little niece was dispatched for it, as well as a couple of bottles of ginger-beer for us, who were too young and wise to thirst for 'Donovans'—which I knew, as soon as it arrived, to be rum.

To do my landlady justice, she interested herself in getting me some decent clothing, and promised to keep me on what remained of my money until I got another ship or some employment ashore. But getting a ship, I found, was an impossible task. My diminutive size and weakly appearance obtained for me only derision when I ventured to ask for a berth on what I considered likely-looking craft, and it soon appeared hopeless to look in that direction any more. Help came from an unexpected quarter. Next door to my lodging-place was the workshop of a figure-head carver, who was a young, energetic man of great skill, and very intimate with my landlady. He was kind enough to employ me in his business, where I soon became useful in sharpening tools and roughing-out work for him and his brother to finish. He paid me sufficient for my board and lodging, which, considering that he was teaching me his trade, was very generous. Here I was quite happy, for my new master was kindness itself; and I believe I was really quick to profit by all I was taught, so as to be worth my pay. But my evil genius pursued me still. His brother became jealous of the attentions I received, and, after I had been with them a couple of months, quarrels between them on my account were of almost daily occurrence. This unsatisfactory state of things culminated in my getting knocked senseless one morning by my enemy during his brother's absence at a job. When Mr. R. returned he was alarmed at my appearance, for I had an ugly cut on the head which made me look quite ghastly. A tremendous row followed, the upshot of which was that Mr. R. sorrowfully informed me that he was obliged to send me away before serious harm was done. He advised me to return to London, where I was better known (?), and gave me ten shillings to pay my fare thither. I took his advice forthwith, finding no difficulty in getting a half ticket to Euston, where I arrived with two shillings and sixpence in my pocket.

The well-known streets looked strange to me after my long absence. In fact, I felt more in the way than ever. I knew nobody that could or would shelter me, and I had got out of the way of street life. Husbanding my scanty store of coppers as well as I could, I haunted Thames Street in the hope that I might pick up a coaster at the King's Head, where, in those days, skippers of small craft used to get most of their crews. There is a cook-shop with a tank of pea-soup in the window, where for a penny I could

always get a belly-full of the thick, comforting stuff—the best value for money in the grub line that I knew of, and I was no bad judge. It—the tank—used to be cleaned out every three days, and a fresh jorum of soup made. On the first day it was comparatively thin; on the second, being filled up without removing the solid matter settled at the bottom, it was better; but on the third day you could almost cut it—a spoon would stand upright in it. And, anxious to clear it out, they gave bigger penn'orths. I often used to go without on the second day, so that I could have two separate portions on the third; after which I felt as bloated as an alderman after a civic feast. But the pence failed, and I picked up very few more; so that, though I slept in any hole or corner I could find, to avoid the expense of lodgings, the time soon came when I was face to face with starvation again. Then a bright idea occurred to me, so obvious that I wondered why it hadn't struck me before. I had my discharge from the *Sea Gem*. I would seek a kindly boarding-master, and ask him to keep me till I got a ship, paying himself out of my advance. I knew better than to go to the so-called 'Sailors' Home.' They don't take in hard-up seamen there. It is only a home for those who can pay down for their accommodation.

With my fortunate idea burning in my mind, I hastened down the West India Dock Road, attacking the first house I saw with 'boarding-house for seamen' painted up over it. The proprietor, an old bo'sun, grumbled at my request a good deal, but he took me in, God bless him! More than that, he got me a ship three days after by means of his influence that way, and once again I was freed from the misery of being masterless. The vessel in which I was to sail was a splendid barque, reminding me strongly of the luckless *Discoverer*, and about the same size. I shall call her the *Bonanza*, for reasons of my own, though that was not her name. She was bound to a port in Jamaica, with a general cargo for new owners, and with a new captain and officers. When we came up to sign on at 'Green's Home,' I found, to my delight, that I was to have twenty shillings a month. Like all the rest, I received a month's advance, out of which my boarding-master paid himself, and provided me with a 'donkey's breakfast' (straw-bed), hook-pot, pannikin, and plate; a knife, and a suit of oilskins. So he didn't rob me to any great extent. He also gave me a few odds and ends of clothing, which had been left by boarders, out of which, being a fair hand with my needle, I managed to botch up enough garments to change. I bade him good-bye with hearty feelings of gratitude, which he fully deserved, and took my departure on board my ship.



*Bound for Jamaica*

ALL hands had been ordered on board in the afternoon, the tide serving about five p.m., but from some unexplained cause we did not sail at the time appointed. This delay led to complications, for although the crew had, for a wonder, come on board fairly sober, they all rejoiced at the opportunity afforded them of a last carouse. By some mysterious means some money was obtained; all hands departed for the purlieus of Shadwell, with the result that at ten o'clock the officers were scouring the slums hunting for them. It was a hopeless task, as the event proved, for by midnight only two had been found, and they were both helplessly drunk. They were dragged on board like bundles of rags, and hoisted into their bunks, where they remained in peace. That tide being lost, the officers had a few hours' rest, turning out again about four a.m. to renew the search. Meanwhile the vessel was shifted into the Shadwell Basin, ready to start the moment her crew were on board. The morning broke cheerlessly enough with a light fall of snow, gradually increasing to a blinding mist of white, through which occasionally a little party came dragging some oblivious mariner, who had spent his respite in filling himself with whatever fire-water he could obtain. At last, weary of waiting, the skipper determined to go on, although he was still two men short. Accordingly the warps were cast off, the tug backed in and took hold of us, and away we went down the river through the thick veil of snow that made the 'mud pilot's' job both difficult and dangerous. There was another boy beside me, a burly fellow of sixteen, who very soon made it clear to me that I was not going to lead a pleasant time with him. He had come from the *Warspite*, and knew nothing of the ways of merchant-ships, which gave me a little advantage over him in one way. But he was well provided with plenty of warm clothing, by the bounty of the Marine Society, while I was so thinly clad that the piercing cold benumbed all my faculties, and I crawled about like a snail, making a very bad impression upon the officers. Our arrival at Gravesend came as a blessed relief, for there was a good hot meal of fresh food ready as soon as the anchor was down. And as all the seamen were in a deep, drunken slumber, Bill, my colleague, and myself had a mighty feed all to ourselves; after which we turned in, and slept unmolested till supper-time. The skipper had gone ashore to get a couple of men in place of the defaulters, and did not return till after dark. He brought two sober seamen with him, who looked

as though they had been outward-bound for a very long time. Their cheeks were quite hollow with hunger, and they had hardly more clothing than they stood in. Yet they were both able men, proving indeed the best seamen on board. After they had eaten a good meal, they were set to keep anchor-watch turn about, until at midnight all hands were called to man the windlass.

I wish it was possible to give my readers an idea of the misery involved in this operation under such conditions. First of all, the officers were obliged to drag the soddened sleepers from their lairs; then to shake, if possible, some gleam of sense into them, some faint idea of what was required of them. After nearly an hour's struggle, the miserable men were at last mustered on the fo'lk'sle head at the windlass levers, where, exposed to the full fury of the bitter wind, they cowered more like sheep than men. Their feelings, as the drink died out of them, and the cold scarched their very vitals, must have been horrible. Occasionally one of them would slip down gently from the fo'lk'sle and disappear, only to be hunted up again by the vigorous boatswain, who kept a watchful eye upon any would-be skulkers. More by dint of the bo'sun's energy, I believe, than any vitality in the limp crew, the anchor was at last lifted, the hawser passed to the hovering tug, and away we glided ghost-like down-stream. Ben, the big boy, and myself were pretty well fagged out with hauling back the big links of cable, and stowing them in neat fakes abaft the windlass; but the bo'sun believed in keeping boys on the go, so we got no time to think about being tired. Luckily for us the wind was dead on end, so that it was useless making sail. All hands were kept busily employed clearing up the decks, getting the running-gear into its proper places, and generally preparing the ship for independent travelling. By daylight the weather grew better, the wind veered to the eastward a little, and the fore-and-aft sails were set. So we drew slowly round to the North Foreland, where the tug slipped our hawser; all sail was set, and we were fairly started on our voyage. As I got a little warmth into my stiffened limbs, I won back some of the good opinion I had forfeited by my clumsy, spiritless movements of the previous day. Being sent aloft to loose some of the square sails, I was cheered by hearing the elderly mate remark quietly, 'That's a smart little boy,' and I must confess I was not displeased to note that Ben only succeeded in drawing down maledictions on his head for his clumsiness and general inability to do what was required of him. There was a vengeful gleam in his eye, as he saw how inferior he was in smartness to myself, which boded no good to me, and from the first day out he never lost an opportunity of doing me an ill turn.

The captain was a fine, manly specimen of a seaman, with

glowing red hair and beard, and a voice of thunder. Fiery tempered, yet easily pacified, he was also one of the most energetic of men, and I never saw a skipper better liked by his crew. The mate was a middle-aged man, at least ten years the captain's senior, rather slow and sedate, but a thorough seaman and navigator. The bo'sun, who was acting second mate, was an old shipmate of the skipper's, and quite his equal in energy. He was one of that fast-decaying type of seamen, a Blackwall rigger, to whom every detail of sailorizing was as familiar as eating his breakfast. Besides this, he was a born leader of men, who would enforce his will regardless of consequences. No man durst give him 'slack lip' on pain of being instantly knocked endways; a feat of which, by reason of his size and strength, he was fully capable. As a result we were a well-disciplined crowd, from whom no growling was heard whatever the work imposed. There were eight A.B.'s, out of whom only three were foreigners; but not one of them calls for any special description from me. They all had the bad old idea that boys were born slaves, who must do all the dirty work on deck, and when below be content with their leavings, wait upon them hand and foot, and take uncomplainingly all the ill-treatment it was their prerogative to bestow. Being at the bottom of the scale, I had a wretched life. For I was no match for Ben, who unfailingly passed on his share of blows to me, so that I was seldom without some visible marks of ill-usage. But the food was certainly above the average. The skipper had the provisioning of the ship, and, being a just man, he did not do as so many would have done under the same circumstances: starve the men to fatten his own pocket. What with the decent meals, and the masterfulness of the bo'sun, she was a contented ship, and more work was done in a day on board than I have ever seen before or since. As usual on this passage, fine weather prevailed, the wind being so steady that for days together we never touched a brace. This was taken advantage of by the skipper to practically refit the ship, all hands being kept at work all day long splicing, turning-in blocks, serving shrouds, fitting new running-gear, and doing rigger's work generally. At night they all slept, with the exception of the helmsman, the look-out man, the officer of the watch and a boy, who had to keep near the officer to carry his commands to the sleepers should the need arise. Really I was kept so constantly at work that, for all I saw of the sea and its marvels, I might as well have been ashore. Except at night, and then I was always half asleep through getting so little legitimate opportunity for rest.

Twenty-eight days flew rapidly past without a single incident worth noting, the same blue sky overhead, and steady breeze astern, until one morning the beautiful shores of Jamaica loomed

up ahead. A few hours later we sailed in between the points of a sheltering coral reef to an anchorage in the pretty little harbour of Falmouth, pompously announcing our arrival by the firing of a four-pounder gun as the anchor was dropped. While we were furling sails and clearing up the decks, visitors were arriving from the four vessels in harbour as well as from the shore, so that by the time work was over our decks were thronged. The skipper seemed a prime favourite here, judging by the number of people who came to see him and congratulate him upon his new command—the largest vessel that had yet entered the little port. There were high times forrard as well as aft, for canoc-loads of good things were brought, and all hands invested recklessly on credit, forgetting that as yet they had no money owing to them by the ship. Not only eatables but sundry bottles of new rum made their appearance, which potent fluid soon made things exceedingly lively in the fo'lk'sle. Matters culminated, of course, in a free fight, which so alarmed me that I crept into a corner under the heel of the bowsprit, out of the way of the revellers. There I went to sleep so soundly that it was morning when I again emerged at the hoarse cry of the boatswain calling us to 'turn to.'

The darkies here were even merrier than my old friends of Demérara. Such a jovial, musical lot I never saw. Living from hand to mouth on the coarsest food, and with the oddest assortment of rags for clothing possible to be imagined, they really seemed to be perfectly happy. The feeblest joke was sufficient to send them into convulsions of laughter, and the gift of an old shirt or pair of pants would keep them on the broad grin for a couple of days. My life was so consistently miserable from harsh treatment, that I continually envied them their careless existence, wondering all the time how they managed to be so jolly under what I often saw to be painful circumstances. To crown my misfortunes I fell ill. After suffering for two or three days, I was sent ashore to hospital. Then I was thankful for what I had thought the climax of my misery. For in the hospital I was allowed to do pretty well as I liked. There was no discipline, no rule of any kind. The doctor, as we called him (I think he must have been the dispenser), was a mulatto, or quadroon, with a comical notion of his vast importance, but a kindly young fellow enough. Sometimes I had medicine; but only by accident, I believe. At any rate, I soon got better, and rambled about the great building or played on the beach outside with the darkie boys of about my own age, forgetting that such a place as the *Bonanza's* fo'lk'sle existed. At last I began to hope that the captain had forgotten my existence, having some dim idea, I suppose, that I might be allowed to spend an indefinite time in this pleasant way. But I was to be rudely undeceived. One

day, when I was presiding with great importance over a game at cricket (much I knew about it), with twenty or thirty youngsters of almost as many shades of colour around me, I suddenly heard my captain calling me, with an angry note in his voice that boded me no good. He had come up from the town to inquire about me, and had caught me unaware. 'You lazy young sodger!' he cried, 'this is how sick you are, is it? I'll give you a lesson for this! Get down to the boat!' The thought of returning to the ship was so terrible to me that I actually dared to ask him to let me go—to discharge me. In a voice that shook with fear and anxiety I told him how I had been treated, and implored him not to take me back with him. I believe he was half-melted, but his anger at what he thought was my skulking got the better of him. 'Serve you dam well right,' he said. 'I'll give you a rope's-ending myself when I've got time. Now be off with you, straight down to the boat.' With that he strode on to the hospital, while I, feeling as if I was going to the scaffold, trudged through the sand down to the landing-place. In about an hour he returned, but said no word more to me as the boat danced over the wavelets back to that hateful prison. It was 'knock-off' time, and I busied myself in sweeping up decks with all the alacrity I could muster, until I was free to fetch my many masters their tea from the galley. They hailed me with many sarcastic queries after my health, and the noble time they supposed I had enjoyed ashore at their expense, commiserating Ben exceedingly for having been obliged to do my work, as they said, while I had been loafing ashore. Happily I got over the evening without anything worse than hard words being thrown at me. Some grievance or another had excited the anger of a big Irishman, and he soon monopolized all attention by a recital of his wrongs. It appeared that the bo'sun had 'got a down on him,' in his opinion; but if the bo'sun thought that he, Mike, was going to be played with, that was just where he was all adrift. He, Mike, was a blank Fenian, so he was, an' he'd just shwim in blood before he was put upon by any blank dock-walloper that ever mooched around Blackwall, so he would. In the fervour of his harangue he omitted to notice how he had raised his voice; but he was presently reminded of it by the voice of the bo'sun at the fo'lk'sle door, calling, 'Mike, I want you a minute!' There was complete silence in a moment, which reigned until the bo'sun repeated his words, with the quiet addition, 'You don't want me to fetch you out, I s'pose?' Then Mike protested feebly that it was his watch below, that he was having his supper, that various reasons, in fact, prevented him from emerging. Like a tiger the bo'sun leapt into the crowded space. There was a medley of arms, heads, and legs, a hubbub of inarticulate noises, but out of it all

the bo'sun and Mike emerged on deck. How they got there, I don't believe any one knew. I heard the bo'sun imploring Mike to stand up to him like a man, and Mike piteously reminding him that he was by no means his match, that he was twenty years older (which was nearly true). 'Very well, then,' said the boss, 'not so much of your slack next time. If you're an old man, behave like one, an' don't open your mouth so wide, in case anybody jumps down your throat.' There was peace after that. Not even a word was said to me when I ventured to crawl into the raffle of rags which was my bunk.

At daylight next morning all hands were called to get under way. In the cabin the skipper had been entertaining a large party of friends, who had been keeping up an extensive carouse all night. Uproariously they departed their several ways as we toiled at the windlass, while boats from all the other vessels in port came and fastened on to us to assist us out from between the reefs. Such aid was absolutely necessary unless the miserably slow method of warping out by a kedge-anchor was resorted to. For in these West Indian ports there is invariably, during the night, a gentle air from the land, which soon after daybreak dies away to a complete calm, lasting perhaps an hour, and succeeded by the invigorating 'doctor,' or sea-breeze. This latter soon gathers strength and blows more or less forcibly all day long. In consequence of this it becomes imperative to gain an offing before the 'doctor' begins, in order that the vessel may be able to fetch off the land in the teeth of an increasing breeze.

Having assisted us to get about two miles out, the boats cast off from us, and with many hearty farewells returned to port, taking with them our pilot. A stark calm succeeded as usual, during which all hands lounged about and whistled for a breeze, until some of the keener observers noticed that the strong under-tow was sweeping us rapidly towards a long spit of sand that stretched seaward, about three miles to the northward of us. Presently the mate's anxiety constrained him to approach the captain, who, with flushed face and abstracted air, was pacing the poop, and suggest that the anchors might be prepared for letting go. Strange to say, the skipper received this hint with a bad grace, answering his officer so abruptly and angrily that his words were distinctly audible all over the ship. The mate, whose age and experience, apart from his other undeniably good qualities, entitled him to very different treatment, bowed and retired, evidently much hurt. A short period of silence followed, while the vessel, her sails hanging as if carved in stone, and her hull motionless, as if in dry dock, was being carried along over the now visible coral bottom at the rate of nearly four knots an hour. At last the bo'sun, unable to contain

himself, strode up to the captain and said boldly, 'Cap'n——, if you don't anchor this ship'll be ashore in another ten minutes.' 'Get off my poop, you impudent rascal! How dare you come an' speak to me like that! For two pins I'd put you in irons. D'ye think I don't know my duty? I never heard such cheek in my life!' and he stamped with fury. But the bo'sun simply said, 'Well, don't you say you wasn't warned, that's all,' and, turning on his heel, left the angry, unreasonable man to himself. By this time all hands were fully possessed of the idea that only a miracle could save the ship, for the reef seemed to be actually touching the keel through the clear water which was carrying us so swiftly over it. And the idea of the vessel's loss filled me with unholy joy. No one could realize how terribly I dreaded the homeward passage, and, now that deliverance seemed so near, I could hardly restrain my feelings. Slinking into the empty forecandle, I waited breathlessly for the crash I felt sure was imminent. It came, a long grinding sensation, like a boat grounding on a pebbly beach magnified a thousand times. Almost delirious, I danced about the place, in the middle of which unpardonable exercise I was discovered by the bo'sun. Outraged beyond speech, he dealt me one savage kick, which put all dancing out of my power for many a day, and for the present stretched me motionless on the deck. Not, however, to lie there long, for hearing my name shouted outside, I dragged myself up, mustering all my energy, and hobbled off to obey the call before some worse thing should befall me.

I found all hands toiling like ants, getting out anchors and hawsers, and doing all that experience could suggest to free the vessel from the position of danger into which she had been brought so recklessly. But the calm was over, the sea-breeze had commenced, and was increasing so fast that already the hitherto placid sea was beginning to foam. Breakers, too, born of the jagged reef so close to the surface, were rolling in steadily, although as yet they were of puny height and weight. Being at so short a distance from the port we had left, our plight was plainly visible to those on shore. Consequently, in a couple of hours, every boat of sufficient size in the place was alongside. Scores of willing hands plied every means by which good might be done, but the steady increase in wind and sea, driving directly shoreward, mocked all efforts at heaving the ship off. There were no steam vessels either in Falmouth or the adjacent ports, so that, when every purchase that could be got upon the anchors and cables laid out astern was brought to a standstill, that branch of the work was perforce abandoned.

Then the cargo was attacked at all three hatches, everybody working as if their very lives depended upon their labours. The

negroes especially seemed to regard the whole affair as a gigantic spree, for without abating one jot of their labours, they yelled, sang, danced about, and behaved generally like a pack of school-boys just let loose without any supervision. As the day wore on the wind increased to a strong gale, and the rollers attained so formidable a height that at times they lifted the vessel bodily from her jagged bed of rock, letting her fall again with a crash that threatened to shake all her stout timbers apart. After each of these blows she seemed to slide seawards a little, but all her buoyancy was gone—the stern went down at an increasing angle, and the water rose in the hold so freely that it was evident there were some serious gaps in the hull. Still the work went on. Drogher after drogher left us filled with salvage, while others crowded as near as they dared to receive the bags, cases and bundles, that were constantly being hurled overside. By nightfall all our own crew were worn out, and transferred to one of the small craft which clung to our side receiving the salvaged cargo. Each man secured what he could of his poor belongings, but I, being unable in the scramble and confusion to get hold of the few rags composing my stock of clothing, contented myself with carrying off an old wide-awake hat containing five blind kittens. The anxious mother kept me close company, much to the amusement of the toiling darkies.

All through the night the wind maintained a most unusual force, and hour by hour the work of salvage became increasingly difficult. Every package had to be dived for into the blackness of the hold, which was quite full of water up to the hatch-coamings. Great torches of tarred rope, lashed to conspicuous points, roared and flared in the gale. By their uncertain glare the black toilers darted hither and thither with astounding energy and a deafening incessant tumult of wild song. Every one was mother-naked, and their ebony skins shone like those of a school of gambolling porpoises. At each tremendous lift and heave of the doomed vessel all hands would make a frantic rush to the side, leaping with blood-curdling yells into the waiting droghers. But the instant it was seen that she yet survived the shock, back they all came and attacked the cargo with renewed vigour. At last a bigger breaker than ever came along, rearing its hoary crest against the paling sky. Reaching the vessel, it enwrapped her in masses of shining foam, lifting her at the same time with such power that for half a minute she seemed all afloat. As it receded, the ill-used hulk, as if loth to leave its embrace, slid along the reef with a rending crash, nor stopped until all that remained visible of her was the jibboom, pointing upward to the sky like a warning beacon. In the whirl of weltering foam left by her sudden exit, the droghers danced like mad things, all having been cut adrift as the yelling crowd sprang



from the sinking ship. As nothing more could possibly be done for the present, the little fleet made sail, and stood in towards the town with their spoil. In every conceivable and inconceivable position the utterly wearied negroes lay about asleep, regardless of the flying spray or such minor inconveniences as being trampled upon by the crews. I found a snug corner out of everybody's way, and there, cuddling my cats, I, too, fell into sweet oblivion. When I awoke, the vessel was just taking the beach in front of the town. The sun was only just rising, but all the population of Falmouth appeared to be there, and intensely solicitous for our welfare. We were immediately taken to the 'hotel,' only a few hundred yards away, and all manner of creature comforts pressed upon us with kindly persistence, as if we had been adrift for a month. Suddenly I realized that I was quite a centre of attraction—the fact of my having rescued the kittens appearing to appeal to all the visitors in a way that I should hardly have believed possible. But, indeed, our reception generally was so kind that we were all in danger of being spoiled. Within the memory of the oldest inhabitant no wreck of such importance had occurred near the port, and consequently, I suppose, we reaped the benefit of long-suppressed benevolence.

## 10

*Adventures of a Shipwrecked Crew*

THE hotel to which we had been brought upon our arrival was, although the only one in the place, far too small to stand the strain of such an influx of visitors as we were, as far as sleeping accommodation went. Therefore arrangements were made for our lodgment in an empty house in town, while for all meals we were to return to the hotel. To this sheltering place we were escorted by a delighted band of darkies, who insisted upon carrying such traps as we possessed, and also worked like bees to sweep and cleanse the house. Such bedding as we had was spread upon the floor in a big front-room, and in Oriental fashion; with the sailor's ready adaptability to circumstances, we made ourselves comfortable. We had plenty of company, for the whole coloured population made holiday and visited us. Few came empty handed, the majority bringing such gifts as they thought would please us: mostly fruit, tobacco, and rum. There was such abundance of the latter, that by dinner-time there was a universal debauch, from which I gladly escaped. Making my way down to the beach I found the work of salvage in full swing, for the hull of the ship had broken apart so much that the floatable cargo was coming ashore in great

quantities. Puncheons of rum, bundles of walking-sticks, cakes of bees-wax and innumerable coco-nuts were heaped in scattered piles upon the beach, each of which was guarded by some one, whose allies were either scouring the shores or paddling furiously after some piece of flotsam apparently worth pursuit. Everywhere I found friends. Such a godsend as this had not fallen to the lot of the dusky Falmouthians before, and they were willing to recognize even the humblest member of the crew as in some sense a benefactor. When I got tired of roaming about the beach, I sought the hotel for something more satisfying than fruit, and was received by the host's buxom daughter, Marian, with great delight. She had taken charge of my hatful of kittens, and showed me, with manifest pride, how comfortable the old cat and her blind progeny had been made. Ungrateful puss would hardly recognize me, her changed circumstances had made her forget old but humble friends.

Noticing that I limped considerably, Marian inquired anxiously whether I had cut my foot, which made me smile, since, not having worn boots for months, my natural soles were almost as hard as tanned leather. But I admitted that there was something hurting me a great deal, upon which she peremptorily ordered me to sit down while she had a look. A short search resulted in her finding the place, which she proceeded to investigate with a needle, and presently drew there-from a bag about as large as a marrowfat pea, which she opened, and showed me was full of tiny eggs. 'You'se had dem chigoes mighty bad, chile,' she said, 'but I gwinter put stop to 'em right now.' With that she went and fetched a tub of warm water. After bathing my feet thoroughly, she searched most carefully for more of these pests, finding two other nests, full like the first, of eggs, but which had caused me only a slight itching sensation. Having removed all she could see, she made a vile compound of tobacco-ash and kerosene, which she rubbed into the wounds, causing me exquisite pain. It took all my fortitude to keep from screaming, and I was unable to prevent a few big tears dropping. With many strange words of endearment she assured me of her sympathy, but declared this heroic treatment to be the only way of effecting a radical cure. I have no doubt that she firmly believed in her treatment, and I must admit that in the end it was certainly effectual; but it was so harsh that I was quite crippled for over a week. During this miserable time I was a close prisoner in our empty house, being generally alone during the day, while through most of the night the drunken antics of my shipmates kept me in constant terror. Nevertheless there was some slight consolation, for by some means it had got about that I could sing, and I was sent for by the officers of the garrison to warble some

of my simple ditties for their amusement. As I was unable to walk, the messengers made a rude litter, upon which they carried me to the hotel, where I was propped up in an armchair while I sang. The generosity of the officers provided me with plenty of money, unfortunately of no service to me, since I dared not refuse the constant demands of my shipmates, who, of course, had none of their own. I made two or three friends among the better-class people in the town, who gave me quite a respectable bag of half-worn clothes, and also promised their aid in other directions.

At last, after the lapse of three weeks, during which time a perfunctory sort of inquiry into the loss of the vessel was held, and the captain acquitted of all blame, it was decided to send the crew round to Kingston, whence we might get shipped home. A small schooner was chartered for this purpose, as no steamers ran round the island; and after considerable delay, provisions for three days were put on board, and we set sail, doubtless much to the relief of those worthies who had been obliged to feed such a hungry horde as we were. But, to our great disgust, we found at the first meal-time that, in addition to the stock of food being disgracefully small, it consisted solely of ship-biscuit, yams, and salt beef of the worst sort. If the kind providers of this outfit could have been affected by the maledictions of our party, they certainly would not have survived the first day of our voyage; after that, the subject dropped from very monotony. Calms and light airs prevailed, and all faces began to lengthen when, on the evening of the third day, the cook announced that the last of the supply of food was before us for supper, while our passage was only beginning. Luckily a young shark was caught, making us a meagre breakfast. Then hunger stared us in the face. We were at least fifteen miles off the land, with a dead calm, and nothing but water left to supply the needs of fourteen hungry men. No fish came to our hooks, no vessels came near us, and, as there was nothing whatever to occupy the men's minds, the subject of food-supply was soon discussed threadbare. Then, as often happens among crews similarly situated, the possibility of there being a Jonah among us was mooted, and called forth an amazing variety of opinions and reminiscences. Unhappily for me, the bo'sun was indiscreet enough to let out the story of my behaviour at the time of the vessel's striking on the reef. He told it laughingly, referring, with a good deal of satisfaction, to the swinging kick he had dealt me, the bruise from which had not even then disappeared. But the effect of his statement upon those ignorant and frightened men was most strange and significant. They accepted it without question as positive proof; first, that all their misfortunes were due to the presence of a Jonah among them, and, secondly, that I was that Jonah!

It may be found difficult of belief that, among the crew of a London ship in the year 1871, such a thing should have been possible; but I solemnly declare it to be true that they at once decided that unless I were cast overboard they would never reach Kingston. I was immediately seized by them and commanded to say my prayers quickly, as I had only a few minutes to live. I looked at those cruel, brutish faces and saw no gleam of pity; I cried for mercy in incoherent terms while they only scowled. With trembling lips, and scarcely beating heart, I tried to do as they told me—say my prayers; but my senses were fast leaving me, and I do not really know what I did say. Then one of them tied my hands behind my back with a bit of fishing-line; and this act first seemed to awaken the three negroes, who were the crew of the schooner, to the fact that murder was intended. It almost drove them crazy with fear and horror. Regardless of the odds against them, they rushed to my rescue, only to be beaten back with the assurance that little would make my tormentors serve them the same. The bitterness of death was almost past, when, to my unbounded amazement, and renewing all my hopes of life, help came from the most unexpected quarter. The bo'sun, who, I do not think, had realized himself how far in earnest they were until then, suddenly bestirred himself, making one stride across the deck to where I lay, hardly conscious. Oh, how god-like I thought him! The scene returns to me across the chasm of years as vividly as a photograph. His manly figure, erect before my poor little shrinking body, and the sweep of his strong right arm as he drove those bloodthirsty pagans back, will never fade from my mind. 'That's enough now,' he said, 'ye dam idiots! Did ye think *I* was goin' ter let yer drown the kid? S'elp me God, ef I thought yer really meant it, damfi wouldn't drown two or three of ye meself, ye yelpin' cowardly scum!' For a short minute or so they faced him, their eyes glaring with the lust of superstitious cruelty, and then (it should be remembered that there were ten of them) they slank away, muttering blasphemies between their clenched teeth. With a bitter laugh of derision he stooped and cut my hands adrift from the lashing, and then resumed his pipe as if nothing extraordinary had happened. It hardly needs saying that I cowered close to his side, nor did I once get out of arm's length of him during the remainder of that passage.

Happily for us a breeze sprang up, sending the schooner bustling along at a good rate into the harbour of Savannah Le Mar, where we arrived late that evening. By some means or other, which I don't understand, considering our penniless condition, a good supply of yams, salt fish, and water was obtained, and we set sail again at about ten p.m. by the light of the incandescent moon.

Our troubles were at an end for the time, the wind holding strong and fair; so that in less than forty-eight hours we were running in swiftly past Port Royal and up to the wharves at Kingston.

It probably had never occurred to any one of us to doubt that when we arrived there it would be all plain sailing for us. As shipwrecked seamen, and in a British port, we naturally supposed that all we needed to do was to march in a body to the Sailors' Home, show our credentials, and be received with the warmest of welcomes. And the rest of our stay, until ships were found for us to go home again in, would, of course, be one delightful round of eating, drinking, and sleeping, varied by such amusements as the place afforded. Accordingly, every man shouldered his belongings, and off we marched, guided by friendly darkies, to the Sailors' Home, which we entered with the air of proprietors. It was a fine, large building, with a double row of verandahs and an air of coolness and comfort extremely grateful to us after our miserable trip in the schooner. We were received with great courtesy, and shown to the dormitory, which, with its rows of clean beds and white mosquito-curtains, looked like fairyland. We were told that breakfast would be ready in a few minutes; so all hands had a good wash, hastening down grubwards at the first stroke of the welcome bell. There appeared to be scarcely any other boarders; at any rate, there were none visible then. Coffee and bread were brought, and then a white man came, who introduced himself as the superintendent. He called our attention to the fact that there were three tariffs here, according to the kind of food desired, and wished to know which of them we would choose. The bo'sun replied that, as we were the guests of our country, we might as well have the best, and added that, as we were somewhat sharp-set, the sooner we got it the happier we should be. 'Oh,' said the official; 'if that's the case, I'm afraid I can't take you in. I've had no orders; and our rule here is payment in advance.' Blank amazement overspread every face, and half a dozen voices volubly attempted to explain the situation. But to all remarks, remonstrances, and objurgations, the superintendent was adamant. He had no doubt it was all true enough; but he had no instructions on our behalf, and, until he had, we could either pay or go. When asked who we ought to apply to, he was blandly ignorant; but it was increasingly evident that he wanted us gone very badly.

Well, there was no help for it, and so, breakfastless and dispirited, we started off again to the town, intending to go to the shipping-office, as the only place we could think of. In a foreign port we should, of course, have gone to the consul at once; but here, under our own flag, no one knew what to do. Our escort of negroes grew quite imposing as we trudged along, and the news of our

reception passed from mouth to mouth. Floods of advice were poured upon us by our sable friends, and offers of hospitality also without limit. Indeed, had any of our crowd been orators, there seemed to be all the materials necessary for a very decent riot. But, peaceably enough, we reached the shipping-office, where we asked humbly if we might see his high-mightiness the shipping-master. After keeping us waiting for nearly an hour, this gentleman came out, and in bullying tones demanded our business. Our spokesman, the bo'sun, laid our hard case before him in a most respectful manner; but before he had finished his story the shipping-master cut him short, roughly telling him that we had no business to come there whining, and that he had nothing to do with us. And with that he ordered us out of the office. Utterly amazed and dispirited at this treatment, we retired. Upon reaching the street we were surrounded at once by the friendly darkies, who made good their previous promises by carrying all hands off to breakfast in their several huts, talking and gesticulating violently all the time. Fortunately I remembered that I had a letter of introduction to a gentleman in the town; so, refusing all offers of hospitality, I hurried off to present it. I was not very cordially received; but a note to the superintendent of the Sailors' Home was at once given me, which procured me instant admission to that institution, with a right to the best entertainment they could give.

Meanwhile the crew had formulated a plan of campaign, romantic enough, but promising well. It should be remembered that Port Royal, at the entrance to Kingston Harbour is, or was, one of our most important colonial naval stations. A huge old line-of-battle ship, called the *Aboukir*, was then the guard-ship, and lay moored opposite the dockyard at Port Royal, several miles from Kingston. A deputation of two, one of which was the bo'sun, determined to board the guardship and lay the case before the commodore, feeling, like all British seamen abroad, that, although not to be lightly approached, the captain of a British man-o'-war could always be depended upon to see justice done to any sailor, however humble. Accordingly, they availed themselves of a friendly fisherman's canoe, and immediately set out on their long paddle down the bay to Port Royal. At the same time the elderly Irishman before spoken of, volunteered to tramp out to Spanish Town, the residence of the Governor of Jamaica—a distance of about ten miles, as nearly as I can remember. He said he was well used to the road, having tramped between nearly every seaport in England. And so, while the majority of the crew lay around in the shade discussing the situation over and over again with a deeply interested crowd of darkies, male and female, the messenger fared forth. The Port Royal deputation reached their goal first,

and, climbing up the steep side of the great guardship, saluted, and asked to see the commodore. They were promptly conducted aft before this officer, who listened patiently to their yarn, and did not interrupt them in its recital. When they ceased speaking, he said, 'Is that all, my men?' 'Yes, yer honour.' 'Then go forward and get some food at once, and, when you have done so, the second lieutenant will return with you. You shall be cared for. Good morning.' With a salute they retreated, and, not being hungry, received a tot of grog instead. Then, to their astonishment and delight, they saw a natty little steam-launch alongside, into which they were invited to descend. A smart young lieutenant in full uniform joined them, the white-clad crew jumped in, and away they went back to Kingston. Long before they arrived at the landing-place the anxious watchers had descried them, and, when they touched land, there was quite an excited crowd ready to welcome them. Straight to the shipping-office went the lieutenant, and at his brief request the shipping-master was immediately forthcoming. Without wasting a word the lieutenant came to the point, demanding to know whether his commanding officer had been rightly informed by these men of the state of their case. As the facts were undeniable there was little reply. Sternly, scornfully, the young officer reminded the discomfited official of his obvious duty to British seamen in distress, with an expression of wonder at its being necessary for him to do so. 'You will be good enough to see all these men's wants immediately attended to, and a passage home found for them at the earliest possible opportunity. The commodore trusts he will hear no more complaints of a like nature.' Then, turning on his heel, the lieutenant bade our delighted fellows good day, returning to his launch amid the cheers of the darkies. A clerk was at once sent with the men to the 'Home' with instructions to the superintendent, and the trouble was over.

Not so those of the unfortunate shipping-master, who must have been heartily sorry for his foolish behaviour. For late in the afternoon our other messenger returned in state from Spanish Town in one of the governor's carriages, accompanied by a secretary who bore a message from the governor that made the shipping-master quake. He could only return an abject apology, with an assurance that the shipwrecked crew were now well cared-for, and that nothing on his part should be lacking for their comfort. But, though we heard no more of the affair, I doubt very much whether the shipping-master did. From the stir the event made in Kingston, I am inclined to think it was a long time before he was permitted to forget it.

For about a fortnight I had a rattling good time in Kingston. Confident in the assurance that I should not be forgotten whenever

a chance presented itself of getting away, I cast all care to the winds, and set about enjoying myself all I knew how. Moonlight fishing-excursions in ramshackle canoes to sheltered coves around the great harbour, long rambles in the wonderful brakes and jungles with darkies, that, though men in years, were children in their fresh enjoyment of everything; singing-parties along the beautiful beaches in the silky evenings, and all with never a thought of to-morrow—oh, it was heavenly! I scarcely saw anything of my shipmates. I didn't want to. My new associates, although black, were full of kindness, and as pleased with me as I was with them; what wonder that I avoided, as far as I could, any intercourse with men whose presence only reminded me of miserable days better forgotten. Out of the many incidents that are mellowed by time into a haze of half-recollection, one grotesque affair stands out sharply, and even now makes me quiver with laughter as its vivid details reappear. A favourite pastime with the *élite* of the coloured population was to gather in large numbers, dressed in all their finery, upon an old disused pier, whose crazy piles and beams actually swayed with a stronger breeze than usual. Upon this ancient structure, when the day's work was over, the young men and women would frisk or loll about, according to their humour; but their chief amusement was the singing of chancies, camp-meeting hymns, and, in fact, anything with a rousing chorus in which all hands could join. On the night in question, song had succeeded song until somebody sent an electric thrill through the whole gathering by starting the negroes' great anthem of freedom, 'Marching through Georgia.' You could hear the pulses of that great crowd beat while they waited breathlessly for the last word of the sonorous verse; and then, in one tremendous burst of melody, every one lifted up heart and voice, while from far-away fishermen on the bay, and labourers on the hills the inspiring chorus rolled on. As verse succeeded verse the enthusiasm rose to fever-heat; every one sprang to their feet, waving their arms and stamping in unison until the crazy structure upon which they stood trembled to its ancient foundations. It was a wonderful sight, having its ludicrous side, doubtless; but the high seriousness, and irrepressible energy of the actors, prevented all desire to laugh. Suddenly, in the height of the chorus, there was a rending crash, and the entire fabric collapsed in one chaotic heap of disjointed timbers and shrieking humanity into the placid waters beneath. No one was hurt, for the tide was high, and every darkey swam like a fish; but the scene of mad merriment on the beach, as one draggled figure after another emerged from the wreckage, was indescribable. Not until long after midnight did the peals of laughter entirely cease, for they rose again and again in all quarters



of the town, as the participants rehearsed the scene to those who had not been fortunate enough to witness it.

I had begun to feel as if I had always lived there, and the thought of leaving had quite disappeared from my mind, when one day I received a note from the gentleman to whom I had brought the letter of introduction, telling me to go on board a large steamer, which had arrived at Kingston that morning, as he had seen the captain, and made arrangements for me to be allowed to work my passage home.

## II

### *An Eventful Passage Home*

Now that the time of my departure drew near, the same old feeling of reluctance to leave a place to which I had become accustomed came upon me with its usual force. Possibly because I was never very long in one place, I have always, except in one instance, felt loth to begin wandering again; and, even now, my mind often turns regretfully to the many ports I have visited, and quite a painful longing seizes me to see them all again. Therefore I am afraid I did not feel nearly as grateful to my friend as I ought to have done; but, fully realizing how dangerous it was for me not to take advantage of this offer, I made myself as presentable as I could and hurried on board. The captain, a big, burly gentleman in a smart uniform, received me with a sharp glance, and dismissed me at once with a curt 'All right; go and tell the chief steward I've sent you to him.' I thanked him, and left the presence, very much in awe of the gorgeous surroundings and great size of everything, so different to all my previous experience of shipboard. She was a fairly large steamship for those days, I suppose of nearly three thousand tons; but to me she was vast beyond conception. When I entered the saloon, I felt utterly crushed beneath the splendour of the place—oh, how small and shabby it would look now, beside the floating palaces of to-day!—and I hardly dared to tread upon the thick carpet which was laid, the vessel being in harbour. When I found the chief steward, he cross-examined me pretty sharply as to my qualifications, etc.; but, being short-handed, he was glad of even such help as I could give, and promptly set me to work. Now, for the first time, I became acquainted with the toilsome routine of housemaid's duties which have to be performed by the steward's staff of a passenger steamer: endless dish-washing, knife and silver-cleaning, floor-scrubbing, and metal-polishing. And all the work had to be done by a staff of four, exclusive of my insignificant self; so that the chief steward

had no time to play the gentleman at large that he so often appears where the manning is on a more liberal scale. Indeed, but for the second steward—a dapper Chinese, rejoicing in the most inappropriate name of ‘Hadji’—I don’t think we could ever have kept things straight. But Hadji was a host in himself. Never in a hurry, always looking well-groomed and smart, the amount of work that this wonderful little man got through in a day was marvellous. Not more so, however, than his history, of which one episode will suffice as a sample. While working on board a large steamer of this same employ lying in Colon, there was a terrific explosion on board—whether of gunpowder or nitro-glycerine I have forgotten. Men, decks, fittings, were hurled skyward amidst a vast cloud of smoke, and the fragments fell in an immense area, extending for hundreds of yards around the unfortunate ship. When the first alarm had subsided, the stewards of an adjacent vessel returned to their tasks below, and found Hadji on the saloon table, having crashed through the skylight in his descent, but unhurt, and apparently unaffrighted. It was not easy to imagine what would disturb his smiling *sang-froid*. If in a gale of wind a heavy sea found its way below, causing the utmost hubbub and terror among the passengers, whether by night or day, Hadji would appear in the thick of the *melée*, calmly setting everything and everybody to rights, his pleasant smile most reassuring to behold.

But, in my admiration for this invaluable Celestial, I am forgetting current events. The day we were to sail, I was much astonished to see all my old shipmates march on board, having been sent by the shipping-master for a passage to England in his anxiety to avoid another interview with the offended powers. They were passengers in the sense that no work was expected of them; but they lived and messed with the crew. However, as we were at different ends of the ship, we did not come in contact at all, for which I was grateful. Yet, strangely enough, I got into my first and only scrape on board through them. The waste of food from the saloon table was very great; but my instructions were to throw all broken meats into a ‘dog-basket’ at washing-up time, with all sorts of dirty odds and ends, which basket was presently emptied over the side. I managed to obtain a clean basket, into which I turned all such broken victuals as I considered worth saving, and, watching my opportunity, I carried this provender forward to my shipmates, who I knew were getting only the usual miserable fare. In this benevolent work I was discovered by the chief steward, who ‘clouted my ear,’ as he termed it, and threatened me with all sorts of pains and penalties if I dared to so offend again. So from thenceforth all the good food not wanted aft went overboard as before.

We were bound to Liverpool *via* Port-au-Prince, in the Island of Hayti, and, from a few words let fall by the passengers, I gathered that it was just possible we might see some 'fun,' as they termed it. I did not then know that Hayti was in the throes of a successful revolution against the sovereignty of Spain and France, which eventually resulted in the establishment of two republics in the island; one-half calling itself the republic of Hayti, the other that of St. Domingo. At that time the long struggle must have been drawing near its close, for on land the triumphant negroes had things all their own way, while at sea the fleets of France and Spain played at what they were pleased to call a blockade. Whether any vessels trading with Hayti paid any attention to the alleged blockade, I do not know; certainly we did not. Nothing at all in our proceedings would have suggested to any one that we were making for a blockaded port. Even when, as we steamed briskly up the long V-shaped gulf, at the apex of which Port-au-Prince lies, we sighted two grim-looking warships lying at anchor on either side of the fairway with steam up, no more notice was taken of them than the usual curiosity evinced by passengers at a strange sail. As we passed between them we could see that one was French, the other Spanish, by their ensigns flying. We rendered the usual sea-courtesy of dipping our flag, but of that no notice at all was taken by them. Doubtless, as usual, they felt none too amicably disposed towards the all-pervading *Anglais*. Right onward we steamed into the harbour, and alongside the Company's hulk, where such scanty cargo as could be collected awaited us. The only other vessel lying there was a long, low steamer of perhaps 700 or 800 tons, whose raking, schooner-spars and funnel, and the light grey-blue that everything was painted, to say nothing of the miniature stars and stripes that floated from her flagstaff, spelt 'Yankee filibuster' as plainly as if she had been lettered with those words in characters two feet wide. There was no sign of life on board of her, except a mere suggestion of bluish smoke, that curled slowly from her funnel, telling of banked fires below. For some time she was an object of the greatest interest to all on board, until other matters occupied all our attention.

The town was in a pitiable condition. What with the long rebellion and civil broils, in addition to the careless, happy-go-lucky fashion in which the farce of government was carried on, whole streets were in ruins; business was at a standstill, and even the few merchants who still clung to the remnants of the trade were in despair. It was no place for white men, anyhow. The negro was master of the situation. He had fought long and savagely for his independence, and now that he had got it he was drunken with it as with brandy. That careless white man who omitted,

from any cause, to salute in the humblest manner any functionary of the Government of the hour, however ludicrous in appearance, speedily found himself in serious trouble, out of which he did not easily extricate himself. And since new officials were constantly emerging from the rag-tag and bob-tail, the only wise course was to salute *every* black man, no matter how menial his capacity might be. One never knew whether the road-mender of to-day might not be a general of division to-morrow, having power of life and death even while wanting a decent pair of trousers.

A party of our fellows were allowed to go ashore, by a serious error of judgement, and, as they strolled carelessly along one of the principal thoroughfares, they met a company of soldiers so scarecrow-like that they simply stood and roared with laughter. This had been crime enough, but the sailor-men must needs aggravate their offence. The officer in command, swelling with rage, demanded their salute. Instead of complying they indulged in some ribaldry, in which his get-up, as well as that of his ragged regiment, was held up to ridicule in effective fashion. This behaviour could not be tolerated. They were surrounded, overpowered, and dragged off to the 'calabozo.' Then, when they saw what their folly had led them into, they repented sorely. It had been 'worth any amount of 'ko-tow' to have escaped from such a fate as now befell them. The lock-up was apparently an ancient cow-byre, standing like an island in a lake of sewage which, under that blazing sun, sent up a steam of putridity into the heavy air. Through this foul morass they were dragged with every indignity their exulting captors could devise, and there, more dead than alive, they were left for twenty-four hours, when the captain managed to overcome the stubborn attitude of the sable authorities, and induce them to accept a substantial fine. When they were released and brought on board they looked like resuscitated corpses, and every article of clothing they wore had to be flung overboard. The doctor examined them with gathering anxiety upon his face, but his only comment was 'The sooner we're out of this hell-hole the better.'

Fortunately we were to sail in the morning, for every one was feverishly anxious to be gone. That evening a passenger embarked, who came alongside in a canoe paddled by two negroes, bringing with him several weighty chests. He was a well-dressed black man, with an air of nervous anxiety; and he hovered around, while his baggage was being hoisted on board, as if he dared not trust it out of his sight. When it was all safely embarked and carried below, to a muttered accompaniment of growls at its weight, the canoe and its sable crew disappeared into the darkness, while the passenger also hid himself, and rarely appeared thenceforward.

At daybreak all hands were astir, the firemen working like sooty gnomes down in their gloomy pit to get steam up, while dense volumes of smoke poured from our funnels, gladdening the eyes of all hands. Amidst the universal activity we yet found time to notice that the thin coronal of vapour hovering above the smoke-stack of the filibuster was also getting more palpable, and the knowing ones winked at each other meaningly. At last a hissing from our steam-pipe betokened full pressure in the boilers, the 'old man' mounted the bridge, and all hands took their stations. 'Cast off fore and aft!' shouted the skipper. Willing hands released the heavy hawsers from the bitts, and, with a rattle of steam-winchcs and cheerful yells from the crew, we moved slowly away from the hulk, the ensign and 'house-flag' being run up at the same time. Then, to our breathless amazement, the filibuster, apparently of her own accord, stole from her position and came gently alongside, a tall, romantic-looking figure mounting her bridge as she did so. So close did she come that the figure on the bridge was able to step nimbly on board of us. He was a spare, elegantly-built man, dressed in a well-fitting suit of grey silk, with an immense white Panama sombrero on his head. He was strikingly handsome, having a dark, oval face, with a heavy black moustache and Velasquez beard, while his black, brilliant eyes, wide set, seemed to take in everything at a glance. Shaking hands cordially with our captain, he said a few words inaudible on deck; then the pair descended from the bridge, and, joined by the mate, entered the chart-room. They remained there for a couple of minutes with the door closed, and then, coming out again, the Yankee leapt on board his own vessel, while our two officers took their stations—the captain on the bridge and the mate forward. Our engine-room bell clanged the order, 'Full speed ahead,' and, as the engines responded, our good ship vibrated from stem to stern under their impulse. Without any apparent effort the Yankee kept her place by our side, not a soul visible on board, except the tall figure lolling calmly on the bridge, meditatively puffing at a big cigar.

The decks being cleared, there was, for a brief space, nothing to do; so all hands, including passengers, crowded the rails, watching with breathless interest the two warships which still lay in grim silence where they were when we entered the harbour. Not a word was spoken, and the clanging chorus of the massive machinery below seemed many times louder than we had ever heard it before. The scene was sufficiently impressive to fix itself permanently in the memory of every one on board. There was not a breath of wind, the water of the widening gulf lying like another sky before us, tinted in innumerable shades by the floating

clouds and the richly-coloured hills on either hand. Every thrust of the pistons drove us nearer those two surly sentinels laden with potential destruction, which we all well knew might, at any moment, be let loose upon us. But there was much comfort in an occasional glance at the splendid old red ensign flying gallantly overhead, for everybody on board felt how much might and majesty it represented. Nearer and nearer we drew to the point midway between the warships, that now began to show a thickening cloud of smoke at their funnels, and a white feather of escaping steam. At last we were fairly between them. Suddenly the silent Yankee alongside straightened himself, made us a sweeping bow, and said, 'A thousand thanks, captain. Farewell, ladies and gentlemen, and a pleasant passage. G'lang ahead!' At his word a gong boomed below, and the lithe vessel sprang forward like an unleashed greyhound, the pitchy fumes from her funnel filling the clear air with the stench of burning petroleum. Boom! boom! went two big guns from the men-of-war as they both started in chase, while from the filibuster's masthead the flag dipped as if in ironical courtesy. Many shots were fired after the daring craft: but although the fountains cast up by the massive shot apparently played all around her, none actually reached her. And as she certainly steamed nearly two knots to their one, she was soon hopelessly out of range. Recognizing this, they gave up the chase. I suppose, according to the rules of romance, they should now have intercepted us; but this is fact, not fiction, and so it must be admitted that they paid not the slightest attention to us, but returned to their old position. Despite our good rate of speed, in less than four hours there was nothing visible of our *protégé* but a long grimy streak in the bright blue sky.

Under ordinary circumstances such an adventure would have afforded an inexhaustible topic of conversation during the remainder of the passage, but unhappily, a much more serious matter soon claimed everybody's attention. Those truly awful words, 'Yellow fever,' began to circulate in terrified whispers, while the merry, genial doctor's face looked terribly solemn. There was little suspense. The very next day the first victim died—one of the men who had spent the night in that unspeakably filthy calabozo at Port-au-Prince. Ordinary prudence forbade any delay in disposing of the poor remains. In less than an hour after death came the solemn little meeting, the bare-headed group at the gangway, the long white bundle on a hatch at an open port, the halting, diffident reading of the old sublime Service, and then the hoarse s-s-s-h, and the sullen plunge into the unknown depths.

The destroyer made such strides that a large tent had to be rigged over the main hatch as an open-air hospital, and there the

brave, unwearied doctor laboured day and night at his hopeless task. There was no discrimination, except as far as the passengers were concerned—perhaps because they were better seasoned to the climate. At any rate none of them were attacked; but of the ship's company, officers, engineers, firemen, sailors, and stewards all gave tithe to death. The disease was terribly swift in its operation. One Friday morning our bo'sun's mate, a huge, hirsute Irishman, suddenly complained of his head. This was at eight a.m. At ten a.m. he was in the hospital grinding his teeth in delirium. A few minutes after everybody on deck was terrified at the apparition of a mother-naked giant, armed with the cook's axe, which he had snatched from beside the galley door, rushing madly about the decks. Not many seconds elapsed before he was alone, striking furiously at everything in his way, while the foam flew from his gaping mouth. Having made the round of the deck aft, he came to the weather side of the wheel-house, within which the quartermaster was calmly steering quite unconscious of what was happening. Suddenly the maniac caught sight of him through the side window, and immediately rained a torrent of tremendous blows upon the stout teak door. Poor Teddy fled out of the lee door, and up into the main rigging just as Carney burst in. Then all was quiet. After a while some one was courageous enough to creep along and peer in. There was Carney, lying at full length on the grating, having fallen upon the upturned edge of the axe, which had sunk deep enough into his chest to have let out a dozen lives. The place was like a slaughter-house. That afternoon one reading of the Service sufficed for three burials, two more men having died while the maniac had possession of the deck.

Naturally there was little levity on board. Cooped up with such an awful scourge none felt inclined for merriment. But the ordinary routine of work went on without a hitch. My shipmates were set to work on full wages to supply the places of the dead, and, although they did not relish doing firemen's duty, they were not sorry to have the prospect of a little money when they reached home, supposing they were still alive. My turn came. One morning at five o'clock, when, as usual, I was called to begin my day's work, I lifted my head to rise, but it fell again like a piece of lead. A feeling of utter helplessness had seized my whole body, although I could not say I felt ill. But not even the awe in which I stood of the chief steward could overcome my want of strength, and I humbly said, 'I'm not able to get up, sir.' Instantly alarmed, the steward fetched the doctor, who, after feeling my pulse, etc., pulled me out of the bunk and set me on my trembling legs, telling the steward to put me to some work that did not require any running about, but on no account to allow me to sit down. His

orders were strictly obeyed, but how I got through that dreadful day I cannot tell. I felt as if I would gladly have given the whole world to be allowed to lie down for a little while, and several times my legs doubled up under me, letting me sink in a heap on the pantry deck, but there was no respite allowed me. This stern treatment was completely successful, for by supper-time I felt quite strong again, and I was troubled no more by any recurrence of those alarming symptoms. What was the matter with me, I never knew; but undoubtedly I owed my life to the doctor's wisdom, much as I hated his treatment at the time. Day after day dragged on, each bringing with it a death for some one of our diminishing number, while the doctor, worn almost to a shadow, still battled with the enemy with unabated vigour. His chief task was with those who had won through the crisis, to nurse them back to strength again. Beef-tea with brandy was his sheet anchor, and this potent reviver he was continually administering in tiny doses, while commenting cheerily on its marvellous virtues, to his wasted patients. Then, as if to fill up our cup of misfortunes, the engines suddenly stopped. The boilers were old—in fact, too old for safe use—and one of them had sprung a dangerous leak. The engineers attacked the trouble with that stolid heroism for which their class is famous, although, from its prosaic nature, little is thought or said about it by a world that loves its heroes to glitter with pomp and circumstance, and to do their great deeds upon some conspicuous stage. Down beneath the boilers, where the narrow limits compelled them to lie at full length, half roasted by the fierce heat, and scalded from head to heel by the spiritings of boiling water, they laboured with hardly a pause for a day and a night. They succeeded in the almost incredible task of patching up the leaky source of our speed, doing moreover their work so well that, although our rate of going was greatly reduced, the repairs held good until we reached port.

The joyful day arrived at last when the faithful doctor was able to announce that the yellow fever had left us, and that, unless some of the convalescents died of weakness, there would be no more deaths from that scourge. It was high time. In the short period of twenty days we had buried thirty men, every one of whose deaths was distinctly traceable to that foul den in Port-au-Prince. Happily the weather held fine, and the wind hung to the south-west, so that we were able to help her along with the sails, until one morning a thrill of delight ran through the ship at the sight of green water alongside, sure sign of our nearness to the Channel. Presently that solitary sentinel, the Fastnet, hove in sight, and soon behind it we saw the green hills of Ireland. All our miseries were now forgotten, and there was a general air of joyful expectation mixed with deep



thankfulness that we had been spared. That afternoon our negro passenger, whom we had hardly seen during the passage, made his appearance on deck. He was evidently seeking the captain, for, as soon as he caught sight of him, he hastened towards him and the two went straight into the captain's state-room. From thence there soon issued strange noises as of a foreigner under strong excitement, while now and then the deep tones of the skipper chimed in as if he were speaking soothingly. Suddenly the door was flung open and the captain called for the mate. That officer responded promptly, but did not succeed in hushing the din. On the contrary, the shrill voice of the black man rose higher than ever, until he was fairly yelling with fury. The mate blew his whistle, and, when the bo'sun appeared in answer to it, he received an order to bring the carpenter with a pair of irons and three or four men. The reinforcements man-handled the excited negro, hauling him with scant ceremony on deck, and bundling him forward into an empty cabin, wherein they locked him and left him to his own reflections. This mysterious affair caused much excitement among both passengers and crew, but it was not until after the vessel had been in dock some days that any explanation was forthcoming. It appeared that, according to *his* story, the negro had been First Lord of the Treasury, or whatever grandiloquent title they had bestowed upon their keeper of the funds, and, seizing a favourable opportunity, he had levanted with quite a large sum (he said \$100,000). Getting safely on board he had committed his loot to the care of the captain and mate, who, however, most unaccountably forgot all about it when he claimed it coming up Channel. Finding that he could by no means recall it to their memories, he went temporarily mad—insane enough, at any rate, to institute proceedings against them for its recovery. His story, which I have given above (with the exception of the way in which he obtained his wealth), was simply laughed at, and he was fain to revert to his original profession of scullion or some such occupation.

The passage up Channel was uneventful. The hateful yellow flag (quarantine) was hoisted as we entered the Mersey; but, as soon as the Health Officer boarded us, we learned that there would be no delay in docking, yellow fever being innocuous in our favoured land. So the dock gates swung wide and we passed in to our berth, the vessel being in two hours deserted by everybody except the night watchman and me.

*Adrift in Liverpool once more*

THAT night I slept soundly, heedless of to-morrow; but when the day dawned the problem of what I was to do confronted me, and a very awkward question it was. For I was still so puny in size and so delicate-looking that I knew it would be no easy matter to persuade any one to employ me. Besides, I was penniless. I had little clothes but what I was wearing, and I felt sure no boarding-master would take me in on the chance of my paying him out of my advance-note here. My only hope was that I might be allowed to work by the ship, at a small weekly wage, until I had earned enough to pay for a week's board, either in the Sailors' Home or some boarding-house where they would try and get me a ship. That hope was soon dashed when the chief steward appeared. With unnecessary gruffness, as I thought, he told me that I was not wanted, and the sooner I got ashore 'out of it' the better. Hadji was kinder. He gave me a cheerful smile, a hearty shake of the hand, and half a crown, besides wishing me luck. In a few minutes I stood outside the dock gates with all the town before me, but not a friend or even an acquaintance, as far as I knew, within its limits. Conscious that I had no time to lose, I wandered about the docks until I was weary, speaking to every likely looking officer on board the various ships I visited, and getting nothing but plenty of good-natured chaff as well as outspoken comments upon my childish appearance. Yes, I got one good meal; so that when night fell, and I sought a great heap of hay in the Cobourg Dock that I had noted as a promising place to spend the night, my precious piece of silver was still unbroken. I slept soundly, though none too warm, my long stay in the tropics having thinned my blood. At daylight I crept stealthily from my nest and recommenced my tramp, but it was fruitless. Then I remembered the wood-carver, and thought I would look him up again. But there was another name over the shop, and I saw that another business was being carried on there. I did not like to go into my old boarding-house next door, feeling sure I should be unwelcome with only two shillings and sixpence in my pocket and no prospects. I went to the Sailors' Home and told my story, but they refused to take me in—as indeed I had fully expected they would.

For the next week I roamed about those wretched docks, getting more and more discouraged every day, until, at last, I was afraid to ask for a berth in case I got a cuff as well as a refusal. Finally, when I had been reduced to picking scraps out of the gutter, I resolved to go to the workhouse. How such an idea entered my

head I can't imagine, but it did, and seemed feasible too. So off I started up Brownlow Hill, but the strains of a German band arrested my none too eager progress, and, all hungry as I was, I stayed to listen. Perhaps the music cheered me up; at any rate, while listening, I determined to go to my old boarding-mistress and offer my services to her in return for a shelter and such scraps as she could spare. She received me ungraciously enough; but I pleaded hard, having learned well the hard lesson of not to take 'no' for an answer without a struggle, and eventually she agreed. The place was a poor kind of cookshop, the staples of which were penny bowls of broth and tea for the poverty-stricken dock labourers, with twopenny plates of potato-pie for the better-off. I honestly earned my keep, and more; but business getting slack, she told me plainly that she could not afford to keep me much longer, and she would allow me a couple of hours a day for a week to look for a ship, at the end of which time I must shift for myself again. I was not altogether sorry at this chance, slender though it was. Every day I hunted diligently about during the time allotted me, and, after four days, I succeeded in getting a job as cabin-boy on board a German barque, the *Greif* of Rostock. The captain had his wife and little daughter on board, neither of whom spoke a word of English; but the captain said he had just discharged an English boy, who had pleased them very well, and whose name of 'Dan' I was in future to answer to. I took up my new duties with zest, doing my best, not only to give satisfaction in my work, but to master the (to me) awful difficulties of the German language. For a time I succeeded admirably, except that the ladies called me 'schoufskopf' (sheep's-head) far more frequently than Dan, being irritated, I suppose, by what they considered my stupidity in not being able to understand them. The only person on board who seemed inclined to be hard upon me was the mate, a huge North German, who never missed an opportunity of giving me a blow, apparently by way of keeping his hand in. Therefore, I exercised all the ingenuity I possessed in keeping out of his way—no easy task—for, as soon as my work in the cabin was finished, I was always called on deck to lend such a hand as I was able. And I could not help noticing that, in spite of the difficulty I had always found in getting a berth, whenever I did succeed in finding one there was never any trouble in keeping me fully employed. So matters progressed in fairly even fashion for three weeks, while the *Greif*, which lay in the Huskisson Dock, was taking in a general cargo for Demerara. I made fair progress with the language, and was certainly something of a favourite with the bo'sun, the cook, and the sailors. I began to hope that I should succeed at last in making myself comfortable, as well as necessary, in some way, to

the comfort of others; and only my dread of the mate gave me any uneasiness. But one morning the cook took advantage of some brief leisure I had to get me to chop some firewood for him. Gaily I started to obey him, using one large piece for a block, and was halfway through my task, when the axe struck a knot, glanced off, and entered the deck, making an ugly mark. The next moment I received a blow under the ear from behind which stretched me bleeding and senseless on the deck. When I came to I felt very sick; but there was such an uproar around me that I speedily forgot my own trouble in my anxiety to know what was the matter. The mate stood, white as chalk, the centre of an angry little crowd of the men, one of whom, a tall, fair Swede, was fairly raving with excitement, and seemed by his threatening motions to be hard put to it to keep his hands to himself. Gradually it dawned upon me that all this row was about me. The mate had struck me brutally and unjustly for what was a pure accident, and his cruelty had actually caused the whole crew to resent his action. This was really one of the strangest experiences I ever had. I have been beaten innumerable times in all sorts of vessels, but only once was a voice ever raised on my behalf besides this occasion, and that was by Joe, the Yorkshireman, against my uncle in my first ship. That a mixed crew of Germans and Scandinavians, on board a German vessel, should raise a protest against the ill-treatment of an English boy, was an unheard-of thing, especially when it is remembered that in those days brutality to boys at sea, except in American ships, was the almost invariable rule.

I was more frightened at the consequences of the mate's action than anything else, especially as it looked as if there would be a regular riot directly. Before, however, any blows were exchanged, the captain arrived. His presence acted like magic. He made no noise, but just pushed his way into the centre of the disturbance, speaking quietly to the men, who at once dispersed to their several duties. Then he turned to me, and said, in the same passionless tone, 'Ashore mit you. If I findt you hier in den minutes more, I schlings you oferbordt.' I did not linger. In less than five minutes I was out of the ship, and again in the unenviable position of being masterless. There was a change in my hitherto persistent bad luck, however. Strolling dejectedly round the dock, I came to the very biggest sailing-ship I had ever yet seen. When I had done admiring her enormous proportions, my attention was caught by a new spar, which lay upon the quay nearly ready for going aloft. I walked round it wondering, with all my might, whatever kind of mast it could be. At last I stopped, and, according to a lifelong habit of mine, began thinking aloud. 'Tain't a schooner's topmast, 'cause there's three sheaveholes in it; nor yet

a barque's mizzen-topmast, fur the same reason. N'ther ain't a ship afloat as 'ud carry sech a stick fur a to'-gallanm'st, nor yet fur a jibboom. *I* never see sech a spar 'n *my* life.' 'You give it up, then, I suppose?' said a grave voice behind me. Turning sharp round I confronted a tall, distinguished-looking gentleman, who was regarding me with an amused smile. 'Yes, sir,' I said, 'I thought I knew all about ships' masts; but I can't think what this one can be for.' 'Well,' he replied, 'I'll enlighten you. It's my ship's foreto'-gallanmast, and that third sheavhole that puzzled you so much is for the skys'le-halliards. Now do you see?' I thanked him and said I did; but I was none the less surprised that any ship could carry such a mighty spar so high up. And then, by a happy inspiration, I told him my story, right down to the last episode. He heard me in silence, and, as soon as I had finished, turned and went on board, telling me to follow him. Gladly enough I obeyed, until we reached the quarter-deck, where we found the shipkeeper. Telling him to find me something to do, the captain then turned to me, saying, 'I shan't be able to take you to sea with me, for all our gear is so heavy that we never carry any boys; but while the ship is in Liverpool you may stay on board doing what you can, and I will pay you twelve shillings a week, out of which you must keep yourself. Now, be a good boy, and I'll see what I can do for you when we sail.' I was hard put to express my gratitude; but he cut me short by walking away, and leaving me to realize my extraordinary good fortune. As soon as he was gone, I hunted up the shipkeeper, who had taken himself off somewhere, and asked him for a job. He was an easy-going individual, not over fond of work himself, or given to expecting much from any one else. So he said, 'Oh, I can't be bothered just now. You scull round a bit 'n have a look at the ship, 'n I'll fine yer sutthin to do bimeby.' That was good enough for me. For the next two or three hours I exhausted all my powers of admiration over this magnificent vessel. She was called the *Jorawur* of London, and built frigate-fashion, with imitation quarter galleries, which added to her already great appearance of size. She belonged to a school that has now departed, whereof the *Superb*, *Calcutta*, *Lady Jocelyn*, and *Hydaspes* (the last two converted steamships), were conspicuous examples. She carried thirty-two A.B.'s and six petty officers, so that she was well manned, even taking her great size and enormous spars into account. But alas! years after, I saw her bought by a firm of Jewish ship-knackers, who razéed her taunt spars, sold the yards off her mizzenmast, turning her into a barque, and finally sent her to sea with *seven* A.B.'s forrard. No one was surprised when she took entire charge of the poor handful of men before she got clear of the Channel. God help them! they could

hardly get her yards round, much less shorten sail. She was eventually picked up, almost derelict, and towed into Falmouth, where the ill-used crew, promptly refused to do any more in her, and were, of course, clapped in gaol therefor, with that steady application of the rights of owners so characteristic of our seaport magistrates. But this is digression.

'Knock-off' time came, and with it the exodus of all the motley crowd of riggers, painters, and stevedores who had been busy about the ship all day. Seeing them depart homewards I remembered, with some misgivings, that I too could only be considered a day-worker, and might also be required to clear out, but whither? So I sought the shipkeeper, and timidly approached the question whether I might be allowed to stay on board. I found him very glad to have some one who would relieve him of the necessity of keeping so close to the ship as he had been doing. He at once gave me the free run of the cabin, and hastened to 'clean himself' preparatory to a cruise down town. I busied myself in hunting up such odds and ends as lay about the state-rooms available for bedding, and before long had rigged myself quite a cosy nook near the glowing stove, which, as the weather was cold, was very comforting. My friend having departed, I was left alone on board the huge vessel; but this, so far from giving me any uneasiness, was just in my line—I was more than contented. I found the keys of the pantry and store-room, where my eager search soon discovered plenty of cuddy bread (biscuits), half a chest of tea, sugar, oatmeal, sago, and arrowroot. There was nothing else eatable or drinkable. This find, however, gave me great delight. I felt no apprehensions now that I should have to spend much in food—a fear which had somewhat daunted me before, seeing how badly I wanted to save all my wages to get myself a few clothes and pay for a week's board in the Sailors' Home when the *Jorauur* sailed. Another expedition to the galley provided me with a saucepan, with which I at once proceeded to make myself a mighty bowl of arrowroot, thinking, in my ignorance, that not only was it very nice to eat, but that it must be most strengthening as well. How could I know that it was only starch? A couple of biscuits and the half-gallon of arrowroot (plenty of sugar in it) made me feel at peace with all the world, if even I was in rather an inflated condition. Fed and warmed, with a good roof over my head, and a fairly comfortable bed (if it *was* composed of rags), I only wanted one thing more to be perfectly happy. And even that was forthcoming—a book. 'Bleak House' lay in one of the pantry drawers waiting for me, I felt. Putting the lamp handy and replenishing the fire, I settled down luxuriously into my nest, all my troubles forgotten in present bliss.

When the shipkeeper came on board I don't know, for when I awoke it was morning—five o'clock. I jumped up, hustled my bed out of sight, and lit the fire. While it was burning up I went on deck for a wash, returning sharp-set to a good breakfast of tea and biscuit, after which I felt ready for anything that might come along. By the look of the shipkeeper when at last he appeared, his last night's excursion had been anywhere but in the paths of virtue. But his amiability was unimpaired, and it was in quite a deprecatory tone that he requested me to 'pop across the road' and get him a drop of rum, as he didn't feel very well. Whether it was my alacrity in obeying his request, or the speed with which I afterwards got him a cup of tea, I don't know, but thenceforth our relations were of the pleasantest kind. I wished, though, that he hadn't found me quite such a miserably cold job; for that forenoon he set me to clean out the row of 400-gallon tanks in which the sea-stock of fresh water was carried, my slender body being easily able to slip in through the 'man-hole'—a feat that was really impossible to him. Now, some of these tanks had over eighteen inches of water in them: all had enough to come well above my ankles. As it was late autumn I got chilled to the marrow, for, as I must needs bale all the water into buckets and pass it up to him through the man-hole, I soon got wet through. Then I had to scrub and sluice vigorously to get the thick coating of rust off, in which process I became very much like a piece of rusty old iron myself. As each tank was thoroughly cleansed, a pail of limewash was handed in to me with a big brush, and I gave top, bottom, and sides a liberal coating of it. In consequence of this occupation my appearance was filthy beyond words; but I did not mind that, until, one day, having come on deck for something, I met the captain. Looking at me with an expression of the liveliest disgust, he said, 'Dirty little beast!' This cut me to the quick, as being both unkind as well as utterly undeserved. However, I made no defence. One of the earliest lessons inculcated on board ship is 'no back answers,' and the boy of gumption loses no time in understanding that the less he says, by way of excuse, the better for his welfare. Much injustice is thus suffered, of course, but there is apparently no help for it. From that day forward I carefully avoided the captain, lest he should discharge me—a fate which I dreaded.

The peculiar diet beginning to pall, even upon my palate, I hit upon a plan which, however indefensible morally, gave me then no qualms, while the results were extremely gratifying. The gang of painters who were re-decorating the cabin brought their meals with them, and I supplied them with tea out of the half-chest in the storeroom, receiving in return a portion of their food.

By this means I still kept my wages intact. The only money I spent while on board was on one unlucky Saturday. Fired by the description of a savoury dumpling, filled with bacon and kidney, which I read in the late steward's cookery book, I slipped ashore and bought the necessary ingredients. On Sunday morning I tried my hand, and, having succeeded in making the dumpling, dropped it clothless into a saucepan of boiling water, made up a roaring fire under, and hungrily awaited the result. Rigidly repressing an eager desire to peep into the pot, I watched the clock until the specified time had elapsed. Then, my fingers trembling with excitement, I lifted the lid and peered through the dense steam. A greyish soup with a villainous burnt smell greeted my sight; my dumpling had melted. Crying with vexation and disappointment, I turned the mess out into a dish, but I couldn't eat it. It was too bad even for me. So I fell back upon sago, and made no more experiments in cookery.

The inevitable day drew near when the ship was to sail. Her cargo of salt (for Calcutta) was nearly all in, the riggers had bent the sails, and a smart steward took charge of the cabin, ejecting me summarily. I took refuge in the fore-castle that night, and the next morning, having made myself as presentable as I could (I was a queer-looking little scarecrow), I waylaid the captain and besought him to ship me for the voyage. Giving me a half-laughing, half-pitying look, he said, 'No, my boy, there is no duty here light enough for you; I cannot take you to sea with me. But I will take you up to the Home, and tell them to get you a ship. You shan't have to prowl the docks again if I can help it.' I thanked him, but ventured to say that I should have liked much better to sail in such a splendid ship as the *Jorawur*. He seemed pleased, but shook his head decidedly, and in a few minutes we were ashore, making for the Sailor's Home. Arriving at the great building, the captain immediately made for the office, and sought an interview with the superintendent. As soon as that gentleman appeared I was brought forward, and introduced to him, with a brief summary of my adventures and present position. My good friend the captain concluded his remarks by paying down a fortnight's board for me, at the same time expressing a hope that they would find me a berth as speedily as possible in some outward-bound ship, so that I should for some time at least be beyond the reach of homeless destitution. The superintendent readily promised his aid, and, bidding me good-bye, the kindly captain returned to his duties, happier, I hope, for the knowledge that he had done me a really good turn, for which it was highly improbable I could ever repay him.

I was at once handed over to the care of one of the stewards,



who led the way up a seemingly interminable series of staircases to a cubicle on the fourth floor. The place was built in tiers of galleries, running right round a large central space lighted from above, and paved at the bottom. This covered-in quadrangle was used as a promenade, smoking-room, and lounge by the inmates, while it was, of course, possible to take in a complete view of the whole interior from any one of the seven galleries. Before we arrived at my berth, the steward was in possession of most of my story, and began to regard me with more friendly interest than I looked for, seeing that no 'tip' was to be expected from me. He seemed surprised when, in answer to his inquiry for my 'dunnage,' I told him I had none but what I stood in; and at once promised that he would see what he could do by way of beating up a few duds for me—a promise he faithfully kept. Then he ushered me into the snug little chamber, with its clean bed and handy lockers, and, giving me a key of it, left me to my own devices.

## 13

*The Dawn of Better Days*

At last I felt as if I was standing on firm ground. Here, a solvent boarder in this great institution, with thirty-six shillings in my pocket, of which no one knew but myself, and with the superintendent pledged to get me a ship, there did seem a prospect that the days of my waifhood were over and done with. I looked around me at the comfort and cleanliness of my little room, I thought of the precarious existence I had been suffering, and I felt very thankful. Outside my door was a row of big basins, well furnished with soap, jack towels, and abundance of water. Off went my clothes, and I fairly revelled in a good wash. I had barely finished when the clangour of a great gong startled me. I rushed to the railings, and looked over to see a general move of the inmates from all quarters towards one goal. Instinct informed me that this strange noise was a summons for dinner; so I hastened to join the throng, and presently found myself in an immense dining-hall filled with long tables, at which a steady stream of men were seating themselves. At one of these tables I took my place, in joyful anticipation of a good dinner, when suddenly a sharp 'Hi!' from the head of the board arrested my attention. It was the steward in charge, who stood waiting to serve out the food. He had spied a stranger. As soon as he caught my eye, he said, 'What flat are you on?' Now the barges in Liverpool are known as 'flats,' and, jumping at the conclusion that I was suspected of being a bargec-boy, I replied, with much heat, 'I'm not on any flat; I've

just left a two-thousand ton ship!' Surely never did a more feeble unintentional joke meet with a warmer reception. My neighbours roared with delight, and, as the words were repeated from table to table, very soon the whole vast chamber reverberated with merriment. Utterly bewildered, I sat speechless, until it was explained to me that the galleries in the Home were called 'flats' too. They were lettered for convenience of distinction, and the steward's query was in order to assure himself that I occupied a room on the flat under his charge, as, otherwise, I had no right at his table. That little matter was soon cleared up, and feasting began. Never in my life had I sat at such a board. Every one ate like giants, and mountains of food vanished, washed down by huge cans of ale, served out liberally by the attendants. I am ashamed to remember how I ate; but the blissful thought that this sort of thing would be a regular incident of each day heightened my enjoyment. The meal over, diners wandered forth again in very different style to their entrance of half an hour before. Hardly knowing whither I went, I sauntered along one of the galleries, when suddenly the words, 'To the Library,' caught my eye. No longer undecided, I hurried in the direction indicated, and found a really fine room, most comfortably furnished, with roaring fires and an enormous number of books. There were only three people in it; indeed, it was never well patronized. I found a volume of Captain Cook's Travels, coiled myself up in a big armchair, and passed at once into another world. Thenceforth, during my stay, that peaceful chamber was my home. Except for a little exercise, sleep, and meals, I scarcely left it, and, long ago though it is, I can vividly remember how entirely happy I was. Occasionally I heard, through the mighty void that separated me from the outer world, a ringing shout of, 'Where's that shipwrecked boy? Anybody seen that shipwrecked boy?' as the huge doorkeeper, standing in the centre of the quadrangle below, bellowed for me. The said shipwrecked urchin was far too comfortable to desire any change in his present circumstances, and, it must be confessed, did nothing to assist the authorities in their efforts to get him a ship. To tell the truth, whenever I must needs go out, I used to watch my opportunity and evade the officials downstairs. I had tasted the sweets of life and was loth to return to the bitter.

During my seclusion in the library, however, I made the acquaintance of several officers of ships, through whose kindness I obtained quite a respectable lot of clothes, so that I was able to reserve my precious little hoard to purchase sea-stock with when the inevitable day came. But, in the meantime, I saw as little of Liverpool as I possibly could. Apart from my love of the library and its contents, the town was hateful to me. Its streets

seemed to scowl at me, and every turning reminded me of misery. But one day, as I was darting across the quadrangle on my return from some errand a long arm shot out from behind a pillar and grabbed me. Panting with my run, I looked up and saw the form of the doorkeeper towering over me. 'Why, where ha' you been stowed away all this time, you young rascal?' he said. 'Here have I ben shoutin' myself hoarse after you, an' never a sight of yer could I get. Come along!' And with that he marched me off to the shipping-office in the same building, and handed me over to one of the clerks, who immediately brought me before a jolly-looking captain who was just engaging his crew. What he said I don't remember; but, in a few minutes, I had signed articles as boy at twenty-five shillings per month on board the *Western Belle* of Greenock, bound to Bombay, and sailing two days after, at eight in the morning, from the Alfred Dock, Seacombe. I received a month's advance like the rest, half of which I had to pay for a week's board, as I had been three weeks in the Home. But with my well-kept little hoard I had sufficient to buy my oilskins, bed, hookpot, pannikin and plate, soap, matches, knife, etc., so that I was better off, in those respects, than I had ever been before.

Early on the morning of the appointed day, in company with several others of the crew who had been lodging at the Home, I was escorted across the Mersey by the official belonging to the institution, whose business it was to see us safe on board. Like all my companions, I had not the slightest idea what sort of a craft I was going in, except that she was a ship of 1225 tons register. This, however, is one of the most common experiences of the sailor. Of late years it has become more the practice for men to cruise round and choose a ship, handing their discharges to the mate as a sort of guarantee that they will be shipped when she signs articles. But, even now, thousands of men take a leap in the dark, often finding themselves in for a most unpleasant experience, which a little forethought on their part would have saved them. When forethought is a characteristic of the sailor, his lot will rapidly amend. That, however, is almost too much to hope for.

We soon arrived at our ship's side, finding her to be an old American-built soft-wood ship, fairly comfortable looking, and with a house on deck for the crew instead of the villainous den beneath the top-gallant-forecastle, far in the fore-part of the ship, which is the lair of seamen in most English ships. I was told off to the petty officers' quarters, or 'half deck,' a fair-sized apartment in the after part of the forward deck-house, with bunks for eight and separated from the men's berth by the galley and carpenter's shop. There was no time to take stock. She was moving, all hands being on board, and, for a wonder, not so drunk as usual. She was

rapidly warped down to the dock gates, where one of the powerful tugs, for which Liverpool has long been justly famous, awaited her—the *Constitution*. The hawser was passed and secured, the ropes which held us to the pier cast off, and away we went down the river at a great rate—our voyage was begun. Much to the discomfort of our fellows a large ship, the *Stornoway*, came rushing past us, bound into dock, having just finished the long round we were beginning. The sight of a 'homeward bounder' is always a depressing one for Jack who is just starting again. And it is usually made harder for him by the jocular remarks of the fortunate crew, who shout of 'bright pots and pannikins and clean donkey's breakfasts' (straw beds), usually throwing some of their rusty tinware overboard, at the same time, to give point to their unkind remarks.

There was little time though for thought, despondent or otherwise. We were rapidly nearing the bar, upon which the rising wind was making a heavy sea get up, and our jibboom had to be rigged out. What this means is, I am afraid, impossible to make clear to a landsman. The amount of work involved in getting the long, heavy spar into position, with all its jungle of standing rigging, which looks to the uninstructed eye a hopeless mass of entanglement, is enormous. When, too, it has to be done as the ship is dragged relentlessly through a heavy head sea, as was now the case, the difficulty and danger is certainly doubled. Yet it must be done, and that speedily, for none of the upper spars on all three masts are secure until what seamen call the 'head gear' is set up, to say nothing of the urgent necessity which may, at any moment, arise of setting the head sails, as the jibs are termed collectively. So rapidly did the sea rise, and so powerful was the tug, that before long heavy masses of water began to come on board, and several ugly lumps came over the forecastle head, half drowning the unfortunate men, who, in poor physical condition, were toiling at the head gear. Some of them were, of course, compelled to work right over the bows, where, as she plunged along, the boiling foam now and then surged right over their heads. Under these circumstances some disaster was inevitable. It came. Suddenly I saw the boatswain leap from the forecastle-deck aft, a distance of some twenty feet, yelling, while in the air, 'Man overboard!' There was hardly a minute's delay before the tug stopped, and everybody gave a sigh of relief to see that the unfortunate man had caught one of the lifebuoys thrown to him. He placed his hands upon the edge of the buoyant ring, which rose edgeways and fell over his head, making him perfectly safe. But he was so cager that he got his arms through, and, with both hands on the buoy, tried to raise himself higher. Unfortunately

he succeeded, and immediately overbalanced, his head going down while his legs hung over the sides of the ring. Burdened as he was with oilskins, sea-boots, and much thick clothing underneath, it was impossible for him to regain his position, and when the boat from the tug picked him up he was quite dead. Steaming back alongside of us the skipper of the tug reported the sad fact, suggesting that he might as well take the body back to Liverpool when he had finished towing us. This was of course agreed to, and the towage resumed. But no sooner had the news of our shipmate's death reached us, than there was a rush to the fore-castle by our crew, to divide the dead man's belongings—a piece of barbarism quite uncommon among seamen. They made such a clean sweep of everything, that when the captain sent to have the deceased seaman's effects brought aft, all that was produced would hardly have filled a large handkerchief, although he had brought two great bags and a bundle on board with him. So passed from among us poor Peter Hill, a steady middle-aged seaman, leaving a widow and two children to mourn their loss, and exist as best they could without the meagre half pay he had left them.

After this calamity the speed of the tug was reduced until the jibboom was rigged and the anchors secured. Then the impatient tug-skipper tried to make up for lost time. Green seas rolled over the bows as the bluff old ship was towed through the ugly, advancing waves at a rate quite beyond anything she could have done unaided. She strained and groaned as if in pain, while the severity of her treatment was attested by a long spell at the pumps, the quantity of water she had in her giving rise to many ominous mutterings among the crew. At last the Tuskar was reached, the topsails and lower staysails were set, and the tug let go of us, much to our relief, as the motion at once became easier. Then came the muster and picking for watches, when the grim fact became apparent that we were grievously undermanned. There were but twelve A.B.'s and one ordinary seaman forward, four tradesmen, i.e. bo'sun, carpenter, sailmaker, and painter, with three boys in the half-deck, steward and cook. Aft were the captain and two officers. Under any circumstances this would have been a very small crew for a ship of her size; but, to make matters worse, she was what sailors call 'parish rigged,' meaning that all her gear was of the cheapest—common rope, that with a little usage grew swollen and clumsy, often requiring the strength of one man to pull the slack of it through the wretched 'Armstrong patent' blocks, and not a purchase of any kind to assist labour except two capstans. Already we had gotten a taste of her quality in setting the scanty sail she now carried; what it would be, later on, when

all sail came to be made, we could easily anticipate. The crew were, as usual, a mixed lot. There was an elderly Yankee bo'sun's mate answering to the name of Nat, who, in spite of his fifty years, was one of the best men on board; a smart little Yorkshireman, very tidy and quiet; and two Liverpool-Irishmen—dirty, slovenly, and obscene always—Flanagan and Mahoney. They, I learned afterwards, had come home a fortnight before from the East Indies with a fairly good pay-day, which they had never seen a copper of, having lain in one continuous state of drunkenness in a cellar, from the evening of their arrival, until the vampires who supplied them with liquor had somehow obtained a claim upon all their wages. Then, when the money was drawn, the two miserable fools were flung into the gutter, sans everything but the filthy rags on their backs. A jovial darkey from Mauritius, with a face whose native ugliness was heightened by an extraordinary marking from smallpox, kept all hands alive with his incessant fun. He signed as Jean Baptiste, which sacred appellation was immediately anglicized to Johnny the Baptist, nor did he ever get called anything else. There was also a Frenchman from St. Nazaire, who, though his English was hardly intelligible, had sailed in our country ships so long that he had lost all desire for anything French. He was also a fine seaman, but the wrong side of forty. A taciturn Dane, tall and thin, but a good man as far as his strength went, was also of our company; and a brawny, hairy Nova Scotiaman, John Bradley, able enough, but by no means willing to exert his great strength. Lastly, of those whom I can remember, came Peter Burn and Julius Cæsar. When the first-named signed in Liverpool, he looked like a hale old sea-dog about fifty, worth half a dozen young, unseasoned men. Unfortunately for us, he had come out of the experienced hands of Paddy Finn, a well-known boarding-master renowned as a 'faker-up' of worn-out and 'long-shore' sailors. Rumour had it, too, that he had recently married a young woman, who had eloped with several years' savings, leaving him without any prospect but the work-house, until Paddy Finn took him in hand for the sake of his month's advance. Be that as it may, it was almost impossible for any one to recognize in the decrepit, palsied old wreck that crawled aft to muster, and answered to the name of Peter Burn, the bluff, hearty old seaman that had signed on so boldly two or three days before. Julius Cæsar was a long, cadaverous lad, willing and good-natured, hailing from Vermont, but so weak and inexperienced that you could hardly feel him on a rope. The other three men have entirely faded from my memory.

Of the petty officers with whom I lived, it only needs just now that I note them as all Scotch, belonging, like the skipper and

mate, to the shores of the Firth of Forth, with the exception of the painter. He was a Yarmouth man, really an A.B., but, in consequence of his great ability in decorating, mixing paints, etc., given five shillings a month extra, with a bunk in the half-deck. There was no sea-sobriquet for him, like 'Bo'sun,' 'Chips,' 'Sails,' or 'Doctor,' so he was called by his rightful surname, 'Barber.' The cook, or 'doctor,' was a grimy Maltese, not quite such a living libel on cookery as usual, but dirty beyond belief. I said there were three boys in the half-deck, but that statement needs qualifying. The eldest of the trio was as good a man as any on board the ship, and deserves much more than passing notice. He had been, like myself, a London arab, although never homeless; for his mother, who earned a scanty living by selling water-cresses, always managed to keep a corner for him in her one room up a Shoreditch court. But Bill was far too manly to be a burden to his mother a day longer than he could help, so, after trying many ways of earning an honest crust, he finally managed to get taken on board the *Warspite* training-ship, whence he was apprenticed in the *Western Belle* for four years. He was now in his third year of service, a sturdy, reliable young fellow of eighteen, not very brilliant, perhaps, but a first-class seaman: a credit to himself and to his training. The other boy, besides myself, was a keen urchin about my own age, on his first voyage, of respectable parentage, and with a good outfit. Whatever his previous experience had been I don't remember; I think he came straight from school. Anyhow, he was artful enough to early earn the title of 'a young sailor, but a d——d old soldier,' which concise character sums up all that a seaman can say as to a person's ability in doing as little as possible. Captain Smith, our chief, was a jolly, easy-going Scotchman of about sixty, always good-tempered, and disinclined to worry about anything. He had his wife and daughter with him, the latter a plain young lady of about twenty-two. Both of them shared the skipper's good qualities, and the ship was certainly more comfortable for their presence. Mr. Edny, the chief mate, was a splendid specimen of manhood, a Scotchman about thirty-five years of age, with coal-black hair and eyes. He was the most hirsute individual I have ever seen, a shaggy black mane, longer and thicker than any Newfoundland dog's, waving all over his chest and back. Mr. Cottam, the second mate, was a square-built, undersized man from the Midlands, the bane of my existence, but a prime seaman who loved work for its own sake.

*Due South*

PERHAPS an undue amount of space has been given to particularizing the *Western Belle's* crew, but my excuse must be that this was my first big ship (the steamer didn't count), as well as my first long voyage. To me it was the commencement of a new era. Hitherto I had not been long enough on board any one ship to take much interest in either her or her crew. The changes had been so numerous and rapid, that while I was certainly accumulating a large stock of varied experiences, I was unable to put them to much practical use, because I remained so small and weak. But now I knew that, barring accidents, I was in for a twelve-months' voyage; I should cross the 'line' four times, round the Cape twice, and return a regular 'Sou'-Spanier,' looking down from a lofty height of superiority upon other sea-boys who had never sailed to the 'Suthard.'

When the watches had been picked I found myself under the second mate, whom I dismissed rather summarily at the close of the last chapter, because I shall have a great deal to say about him later on. For the present it suffices to note that my evil genius must have been in the ascendant, for 'Jemmy the Scrubber,' as we always called Mr. Cottam behind his back, was a regular tyrant, who spared nobody, not even himself. The men of his watch took things easily, as usual, knowing full well that he was unable to coerce them; but I was helpless in his hands, and he did not fail to let me know the fact. There was some compensation for me in having Bill Smith, the sturdy apprentice before mentioned, as my watch-mate, for he was both able and willing to lend me a helping hand whenever possible, although of course he could not shield me from the amiable weaknesses of Jemmy the Scrubber. Still, his friendship was very valuable to me, and it has endured unto this day.

At the outset of the voyage I found, that if I had never earned my pay in my life before, I was going to do so now. When there was one hand at the wheel and one on the look-out, there were four A.B.'s, Bill and myself, available to make or shorten sail. Consequently it became the practice to send me up alone to loose whatever sail was going to be set during the night, and I would go up and down from one masthead to the other while the men did the hauling on deck. Then when the job was finished the men retired to their several corners, more often than not into their bunks in the fo'lk'sle, leaving me to coil up all the ropes and then return



to my post aft in front of the poop, ready to carry Jemmy's orders when he gave any. She was a very heavy-working ship, as before noted, making the ordinary duties of trimming sail for such a handful of men most exhaustive; but, in addition to that, the food was so bad that it reminded me strongly of the *Arabella*. Yet so usual, so universal, was this shameful condition of things, that there was no more than the ordinary quantity of 'growling'; no complaints brought aft; and things went on pretty comfortably. Of course she leaked—'made a good drop o' water,' as sailors say—but still in fine weather the pumps would 'suck' in ten minutes at four-hour intervals. But sail she couldn't. A Rochester barge would have given her two miles in ten, and as to 'turning to windward'—that is, zig-zagging against a contrary wind—it was a mere farce. She made so much leeway that she just sailed to and fro on the same old track till the wind freed. Therefore it was a weary time before we got down as far as that dreaded stretch of stormy sea known to seamen as the 'Bay,' although it extends many a league Atlantic-wards from the Bay of Biscay. Here we battered about for several days, against a persistent south-westerly wind that refused to let us get south, until at last it freshened into a bitter gale, accompanied by the ugly cross sea that gives this region such an unenviable notoriety. Under two lower topsails and reefed foresail we wallowed and drifted, watching with envious gaze the 'flyers' gliding homeward under enormous clouds of canvas, steady and dry, while we were just like a half-tide rock, swept fore and aft by every comber that came hissing along. Here I got a narrow squeak for my life. I was coiling up the gear in the waist when she lurched heavily to windward, just as a green mass of water lifted itself like a hill on that side. Before she could rise to it, hundreds of tons of foaming water rolled on board, sweeping me blindly off my feet and out over the lee rail. Clinging desperately to the rope I held, I waited, swollen almost to bursting with holding my breath, but quite unconscious of the fact that I was overboard. At last she rolled to windward again, and I was swept back by another wave, which flung me like a swab into the tangle of gear surrounding the mainmast, little the worse for my perilous journey. And thus she behaved all that night, never free from a roaring mass of water that swept fore and aft continually, leaving not a dry corner anywhere. Sundry noises beneath the fore-hatch warned us that something heavy among the stores had broken adrift; but it was impossible to go down and see, not only for fear of the water getting below, but because of the accumulated gas from the coal, which, unventilated for days, would only have needed a spark to have blown the ship sky-high. Towards morning, however, the weather fined down. As soon as possible the fore-

hatch was taken off, and there we found in the 'tween decks a mess awful to contemplate. The whole of our sea-stock of salt beef and pork in tierces had broken adrift, together with two casks of Stockholm tar, and had been hurled backwards and forwards across the ship until every barrel was broken in pieces. There lay the big joints of meat like miniature islands in a sea of tar, except that, with every roll of the ship, they swam languidly from side to side in the black flood. All hands were set to work to collect the food—it was all we had—hoist it on deck, and secure it there in such fashion as we could. Then it was scraped clear of the thickest of the tar, the barrels were set up again and refilled with the filthy stuff, into the midst of which freshly-made pickle was poured. It was not good food before, but now, completely saturated with tar, it was nauseous beyond the power of words to describe. Yet it was eaten, and before long we got so used to the flavour that it passed unnoticed. This diversion kept all hands busy for two or three days, during which the weather was kind to us, and we gradually stole south, until the steady trade took hold of us and helped us along into settled fine weather.

By this time all hands had settled down into their several grooves, determined to make the best of a bad bargain. One thing was agreed upon—that, except for her short-handedness and starvation, she was a pretty comfortable ship. There was no driving, no rows while the feminine influence aft made itself felt in the general freedom from bad language that prevailed on deck. But we were not yet low enough in numbers, apparently. The old man, Peter Burn, who shook so much that he was never allowed aloft, became perfectly useless. He had been an old man-o'-war's man, living, whenever possible, a life of riot and debauchery, for which he was now called upon to pay the penalty. At a time of life when many men are not long past their prime, he was reduced to childishness—a very picture of senile decay. His body too, in consequence, I suppose, of the foul feeding, became a horrible sight upon the opening of more than forty abscesses, from which, however, he seemed to feel no pain. Strange to say, his rough shipmates, who of course had to make good his deficiency, showed no resentment at the serious addition to their labours. With a gentleness and care that could hardly have been expected of them, they endeavoured to make the ancient mariner's declining days as comfortable as the circumstances would allow, and I am sure that nowhere could the old fellow have been more carefully looked after.

She was an unlucky ship. Her slow gait, even with favouring winds, was something to wonder at; but, as if even that were not delay enough, we met with a most abnormal amount of calms and

light airs—hindrances that would have made some skippers I have known unbearable to live with. But Captain Smith was one of a thousand. Nothing seemed to ruffle his serene good-humour. It must have been infectious, for the conditions of food and work were so bad that a little ugly temper added thereto would certainly have caused a mutiny. As usual I, unluckiest of urchins, was about the worst-off person on board. Jemmy the Scrubber, unable to imbue the rest of his watch with his own restless activity, gave me no peace night or day. Woe betide me, if, overcome by sleep in my watch on deck at night, I failed to hear his first call. With a bull's-eye lantern in one hand, and a piece of ratline stuff in the other, he would prowls around until he found me, and then—well, I was wide-awake enough for the rest of that watch. In the half-deck I was treated fairly well, except in the matter of food, and even that got put right in time. I have often wondered since how four men of good standing, like our petty officers, could deliberately cheat two boys out of their scanty share of the only eatable food we had; but they certainly did. Every other day except Saturday was 'duff' day, when the modicum of flour allowed us was made into a plain pudding by the addition of yeast and fat. The portion due to each made a decent-sized plateful, and, with a spoonful of questionable molasses, furnished the best meals we got. Now the duff for the half-deck was boiled in a conical bag, and turned out very similar in shape and size to a sugar-loaf. It was brought into the house in a tin pan not wide enough to allow it to lay flat, so it stuck up diagonally. The sailmaker aways 'whacked it out,' marking off as many divisions as there were candidates. So far so good. But when he cut off his portion, instead of cutting fair across the duff, he used to cut straight down, thus taking off half the next portion as well, owing to the diagonal position of the duff. Then came the bo'sun, who of course followed suit, and the others likewise, until the last two 'whacks' falling to the share of the boys was really only the size of one. For a long time this hardship was endured in silence, until one day, at the weekly apportionment of the sugar, much the same sort of thing took place. Then Bil Smith broke out, and there was a rare to-do. Our seniors were dreadfully indignant at his daring to hint at the possibility of their being unfair, and, for some time, I feared a combined assault upon the sturdy fellow. All their tall talk, however, only served to stiffen his back, and, in the result, we got our fair share of what was going.

Hitherto I had not seen any deep-sea fishing; so, when one day a school of bonito came leaping round the bows, and the mate went out on the jibboom end with a line, my curiosity was at fever-heat. How ever I endured until eight bells I don't know.

Once or twice the wrath of Jemmy was kindled against me for inattention, and I got a sharp reminder of my duties. At last eight bells struck. I had the dinner in the house in a twinkling, and in another minute was rushing out along the boom to where the mate had left his line while he went in to 'take the sun.' The tackle was simplicity itself, consisting solely of a stout line about the thickness of blind-cord, with an inch hook firmly seized to its end, baited with a shred of white rag. My fingers trembled so that I could hardly loose the neat coil the mate had left, for below me, gambolling in the sparkling foam beaten forward from the bluff bows, were quite a large number of splendid fish, although they did not seem nearly as large as they were in reality. At last I got the line free, and, bestriding the boom-end with my legs firmly locked between the jib guys, I allowed the lure to flutter away to leeward, jerking it gently so as to imitate a leaping squid or bewildered flying-fish. Splash! and the graceful curve of my line suddenly changed into a straight; I had hooked one. In a perfect frenzy of excitement I hauled madly, scarcely daring to look below where my prize dangled, his weight fairly cutting my hands. At last I had him in my arms, but such was the tremendous vibration of his massive body that, although I plunged my thumbs through his gills, I was benumbed from head to heel. All feeling left me, and my head was beginning to swim, when I bethought me of plunging him into the folds of the jib, which was furled on the boom. With a last flash of energy I accomplished this, falling across the quivering carcase half dead myself. But before he was quite dead I had recovered, and, prouder, than any victorious warrior returning from the hard-won field, I bore him inboard. I was received in the half-deck as a benefactor to my species, for had I not provided twenty pounds of fresh food. How welcome my catch was can hardly be comprehended by those who have never known what it means to subsist upon beef and pork, which when dry turns white and hard as salt itself, with the flavour of tar superadded, and that for many weeks. The first flush of excitement over, attention was called to my gory appearance. I had not noticed it before, but now I found that I was literally drenched in blood, black-red from the chin downwards. What of that? I had caught my first big fish, and nothing else mattered. Out I went again, succeeding in a few minutes in hooking another. But one of my watchmates must needs come interfering, and take it away from me, in spite of my protests. I was actually bold enough to tell him that the way he was carrying it was unsafe—the idea of me, with my five minutes' experience, dictating to an old 'shell-back' like Bradley. I was right, though, for, when half-way in, the fish gave a convulsive plunge and fell, leaving his gills in Bradley's

fist. I didn't say anything, but like the parrot, I did some tall thinking. All the fish left us instanter, attracted doubtless by the blood of their mutilated fellow; so, sulkily coiling up the line, I came in. There was a plentiful supper at four bells, and, though I should now pronounce the flesh of a bonito as dry and tasteless, then it was sweeter to me than I could express. While it was yet in my mouth, yea! ere it was chewed, retribution overtook me. I heard the watch on deck setting sail forward, and more conversation ensuing upon the performance than usual. Suddenly a shock-head thrust itself into the half-deck. The voice of Caesar said ominously, 'Tom, th' mate wanse yer!' With a thrill of dread crawling up the roots of my hair I obeyed, following the messenger forrard. There stood the port watch, grouped round the mate, gazing upward at the sail they had just been setting, the jib. Well they might. From head to tack down its whole length ran ghastly streaks and patches of gore, a sight that made my flesh creep. 'Did you do that?' said the mate in an awful tone. There was no need for any answer; my guilt was manifest. Vengeance lingered not, and, in a few minutes, the *manes* of my first fish were propitiated. Lamely I retired to complete my supper with what appetite I could muster, and to vow that the next fishing I did I would take a sack out with me. But the evidence of my offence was permanent, surviving the bleaching of sun, rain, and spray throughout the whole of the voyage. My waspish little tyrant, the second mate, could hardly rope's-end me again for the same fault; but he made it an excuse for robbing me of a goodly portion of each day-watch below, keeping me on deck sorting the carpet-thrums of which he was for ever making hearthrugs. Oh, how I did hate his fancy-work and him too. But I dared not complain or refuse, although at night I was always getting into trouble for going to sleep, which I really couldn't help.

## 15

*Eight Weeks' Calm*

LEISURELY as our progress had been hitherto, we had always managed to make some Southing each day. But now ensued a time unique in all my experience. What our exact position was I do not know; but I fancy it must have been somewhere near the Equator in the Atlantic. When the faltering, fitful breezes first failed us, a long succession of rain deluges set in, which at first were most heartily welcome. For, like many other ships of her class in those days, the *Western Belle's* store of water-tanks contained barely enough of the precious fluid to suffice us for half the voyage,

even upon the regulation allowance of three quarts per man each day. Rain was depended upon to replenish them in time, and on such voyages, of course, seldom failed to afford a bountiful supply. Now, however, it fell for whole days in one solid, roaring downpour that, in spite of the many openings by which the decks were drained, filled them so that it was possible to swim from poop to forecastle in fresh water. Everybody turned out all their belongings that were washable, and a regular carnival of soap and water took place. Then the ports were opened and the decks cleared of water. It still poured over the front of the poop like a small Niagara, and from thence, as being the cleanest, we refilled all our tanks. Still the flood came down without a break, until the incessant roar became awe-inspiring. Many of the crew spoke of it as passing all their experience, even hinting at the possibility of another flood. It was so heavy that the experiment was successfully tried of scooping up drinkable water off the sea-surface, which was like a mill-pond for its level, although all a-foam with the falling torrent. The ship lay as nearly motionless as it is possible for a ship to be out in mid-ocean. For Coleridge's simile of 'A painted ship upon a painted ocean' is only a poet's licence, and grates upon a seaman as the sole picture in that wonderful work which is not literally true. Admiral Wharton's remark that 'In all the incalculable mass of the ocean not one particle is ever absolutely at rest,' may strike most people as strange; but it is sober truth, and therefore it is impossible for a vessel at sea ever to be perfectly motionless.

Gradually the massive downpour abated, the sun peeped out, and the sodden decks and gear dried up. But there was no breath of wind. And as Captain Smith was a practical man, with all his patience, he decided to utilize this otherwise barren time in carrying out a scheme he had purposed leaving for some long spell of waiting in Indian harbours. We had on deck three huge, rough spars—long logs, in fact. These were loosed from their lashings and lifted on to the gallows, whereon the boats usually rested. A big rip-saw was produced—the only time I ever saw one on board ship—and the 'strange spectacle was witnessed of a ship's deck being turned into a saw-pit, sailors into sawyers. Thick slabs were sawn off the spars, after which the carpenter, and a couple of men who could handle axe and adze, set to work to fashion them into topsail-yards. Meanwhile, the rest of the hands toiled like beavers, unbending sails, sending down yards, and overhauling standing rigging, until the old ship looked as if she were in some snug dock-corner being dismantled. All day long this work went on, no one knowing or caring whose watch on deck it should be, and at night the weary workers lay around

promiscuously, sleeping away the hours of darkness in calm certainty of being undisturbed. This curious interlude in an ocean voyage developed strange faculties in our men. The iron bands, which form part of the fittings of a ship's yards, were, owing to the skipper's desire to have heavier spars, found to be too small. No matter. An impromptu forge was rigged up on a barrel filled with sand, a most ingenious bellows was made by somebody, and, as if born and bred in a smithy, the bo'sun and two hands manipulated that ironwork in such workmanlike fashion that it answered its purpose as well as if turned out of a Blackwall foundry.

For many days this work went on, with apparently no more notice taken of its strangeness than as if it were the normal course of events. But gradually the deathly stillness of our surroundings, the utter absence of the faintest air of wind, or sign of any other vessel in a similar plight, began to tell upon everybody's nerves. Men took to gathering in twos and threes in the evenings to recount their experiences of lengthened calms, and the yarns they had heard of bygone tragedies connected with ships that had strayed into windless seas. Even the busy working-hours could not prevent the men from gazing uneasily over the side where the familiar, smiling face of the sea was undergoing a mysterious change. There is about the deep sea, even in the hottest weather, a delicious atmosphere of cool cleanliness, a searching purity, such as the earth can never yield, giving one the fixed idea that to this vast, unpollutable limpidity the nations owe their health. In some dim fashion this thought is present with all seafarers, however dense and unnoticing they may be. Therefore, when that familiar freshness was found to be giving place to a stale, stagnant greasiness to which a mawkish, uninigorating atmosphere clung, what wonder that uneasiness—all the more difficult to bear quietly because undefinable—became generally manifest. Adding to the sense of eeriness, was the fact that old Peter was failing fast. I have already mentioned how willingly his share of the common burden was borne by his shipmates, and how loyally they tended him, even though such service as he needed could not be spoken of without offence. But now his mind had completely gone. He lived in some misty past, about which he babbled unceasingly. Often, in the still evenings, all hands would gather round him, listening, in perfect silence, to his disjointed reminiscences of desperate deeds in the way of duty, of long-drawn-out debaucheries in filthy rookeries of home ports, as well as the well-known hells at Hong Kong, Calcutta, or Callao. They were strange scenes, those dog-watch gatherings, nothing distinctly visible but the red glow of the pipes—except when the sudden glare of a match, struck to

light fresh tobacco, shed a momentary gleam over the group of haggard, bearded faces, each beclouded with an unwonted shadow. In the midst, a placid stream of sound, Peter's voice prattled on, its lurid language in the strangest contrast to the gentleness of his speech. Still the days dragged on and the faces grew longer. All the refitting was finished, and only the ordinary routine of ship-life was left to be carried on. Happily those duties are always, in the hands of capable officers, sufficiently onerous to prevent time ever hanging heavily. One of the strangest of all the strange notions current ashore about sea-life is that sailors have nothing to do but watch the ship go along, except during stormy weather. One would have thought that the never-ending, ever-beginning round of work in a house that is properly kept would have taught all landsmen and women that the great complicated machine called a ship would demand at least equal labours to keep it fit and in working order. But 'watch and watch' was now restored, which, of course, threw a great deal of additional time upon the men's hands, since they could still sleep through the night, if they chose, without fear of being disturbed. So for hours, when unemployed, men took to hanging over the rail, watching, with an unnatural curiosity, the myriads of strange creatures that, lured from their silent haunts in the gloomy middle-depths of the ocean by the long-enduring stillness above, came crawling about, blinking glassily with dead-looking eyes at the unfamiliar light. Truly it was an uncanny sight. Not only fish of bizarre shape abounded, but vast numbers of great medusae—semi-transparent simulacra of all the hideous things that ever haunted a maniac's dream—crawled greasily about us, befouling the once clear blue of the sea, and coating its sleek surface with stagnant slime. And, deeper down, mighty shadows passed sluggishly to and fro, filling the gazers with wordless terror as the days crept wearily away and those formless apparitions gradually chose higher levels. Overhead the sweet fathomless azure of the sky paled as if in sympathy with the silent sea. Cloudless, indeed, but overspread with a filmy veil of strange mist, that, while it robbed the sun of its glare, seemed to enclose us within a dome of heat, unventilated and stale. When night fell, instead of cool refreshment—such as comes, even in tropical calms, after sunset at all ordinary times—there arose a foul odour of decaying things that clung clammily to the palate like a miasma. The densely populated ocean beneath palpitated with pale fire, the gleaming of putrescence. Instead of the usual brisk movement seen among the glowing denizens of the deep, everything crawled languidly, as if infected with some universal pestilence. Moon and stars lost their strong silver glow, and were no longer reflected in the smoothness



beneath as if shining in another heaven. And at moonrise, when the fantastic mist-wreaths writhed about the horizon, the broad red disc of the moon would be distorted into many uncouth shapes, or patterns of strange design were drawn across her paling surface.

At last, one night, when old Peter was holding his usual levee, he suddenly raised his voice, and authoritatively demanded that his auditors should bear him on to the fore-castle head. They instantly obeyed, lifting him tenderly upon his mattress, and laying him gently by the side of the capstan. Then all hands gathered round him in the darkness, only the glow of the pipes fitfully illuminating the rugged countenances. Slowly the moon rose, but sent no silvery pathway across the sea, until suddenly, as if with a great effort, she broke through the hampering mist-wreaths that seemed to clog her upward way. A pure, pale beam shot right athwart our vessel, lighting up the little group of watchers on the fore-castle, and lingering as if lovingly upon the withered, weather-scarred face of our ancient shipmate. As it did so he smiled—a patient, happy smile—his lips unclosed, and, with a sigh of relief like a weary child, he died.

Breaking the steadfast silence came the mate's mellow cry, 'Square the mainyard!' As the men rose to obey, a gentle breath, welcome as the first thrill of returning health, kissed the tanned faces. Slowly the great yards swung round, a pleasant murmuring as of a mountain rivulet arose from the bows, and the long calm was over. In quiet attendance upon the dead came the sailmaker with a roll of worn canvas under his arm in which the poor, shrivelled remains were reverently wrapped and neatly sewn up. A big lump of coal was found and secured to the feet, and the long parcel was borne gently aft to the gangway. There in the moon-light we all gathered, while the skipper, with faltering, unaccustomed voice, read the stately words of the Burial Service, all hands standing like statues as they listened to what all admit to be one of the most solemn, as well as majestic selections known in our splendid language. Suddenly there was a pause; the skipper raised his hand, and those who supported the plank on which the worn-out tabernacle of old Peter lay, gently raised its inner end. There was a subdued s-s-s-h as the white fardel slid slowly seaward, followed by a sullen plunge. All rushed to the side, where an ascending column of green light marked the descent into those calm profundities of our dead. An almost inaudible sigh of relief escaped from every lip, as if a well-nigh intolerable burden had been removed. Undoubtedly that was the predominant feeling, intensified by the fact that a sweet breeze was now blowing steadily. In the blue dome above, the moon and her attendant stars were shining with their full splendour, and from the now

sparkling face of the surrounding sea the sickly mist was rolled quite away.

Thenceforward, although our progress was wretchedly slow, of course, we were little troubled by calms. But our tribulations were not yet all over. Barber, the painter A.B., was taken ill; so ill as to be quite useless, nor did he ever again that voyage recover sufficiently to resume his place as an active member of the crew. And other men were grievously tried by scurvy, which, though in a mild form, was painful and weakening. How it was that they were no worse, I cannot think, for the food was bad enough truly for the development of that malignant disease in its worst form. But, somehow, we worried along in dogged fashion, every one showing rare patience under their unmerited sufferings.

And so, in laborious fashion, we crept southward and round the Cape without any bad weather worth mentioning, until well to the eastward of that justly dreaded point. Then one night we had a narrow escape from serious disaster. It was our (the second mate's) watch on deck from eight to midnight. We were jogging along before a lithe south-westerly breeze, at about four knots, the weather being singularly fine for those latitudes. Down in the cabin the skipper, his wife and daughter, and the mate were playing cards, while the second mate, with a carelessness most unusual with him, was hanging over the open scuttle, absorbed in watching the game. Rees, the old Frenchman with a Welsh name, was on the look-out, and I heard him muttering and grumbling because the officer of the watch was oblivious of the fact that an ominous-looking cloud was rising in the north-east, or almost right ahead. Presently from its black bosom faint gleams of lightning showed themselves, while the subdued murmur of the breeze we had become hushed in an unnatural quiet. With a quickness that seemed miraculous, the threatening cloud ahead overspread the sky, and still the second mate did not realize what was coming. As all sail was set, the position began to look so threatening that all the watch took the alarm, and gathered in the waist, ready for the sudden emergency imminent. Presently the wind dropped dead, its sudden failure arousing the supine officer, who, lifting his head, took in the situation at a glance. But before he could issue an order, there came a smart patter of rain followed immediately by a roar as the north-east wind, like a savage beast, leapt upon us, taking us flat aback. Then there was a hubbub. Up rushed the skipper and mate, shouting for all hands. Everything was let go at once; but the sails, jammed backward against the masts, refused to allow the yards to come down. The ship began to drive astern most dangerously, nor could she be got round by any means. Presently she dipped her stern right under,

taking a sea in over the taffrail that filled the decks fore and aft. It was now a question of minutes with us. If she could not be got round she would certainly go down stern foremost, for again and again she drove her broad stern under the rising sea as the now furious gale hurled her backwards. The feeble efforts of the crew seemed utterly unavailing against the mighty force of this sudden tempest. But, providentially, a huge sea caught her on one bow, flinging her head off far enough for the wind to grip the head sails. Round she spun upon her heel like a top, and in another minute the shreds of the rending sails were thundering above our heads as they flew to fragments. In an indescribable uproar, wherein the howling of the gale, the reverberations of the thunder, and the crash of our yards were all mingled, the ill-used vessel sped away before the wind as if fleeing for her life. An almost continual glare of lightning shed an unearthly light over all, by which the havoc that was being wrought was plainly to be seen. How that night's work was ever accomplished I have no idea. But when morning dawned we were fore-reaching under the three lower topsails and fore topmast staysail, the fluttering rags of what remained of our lighter sails being secured in some haphazard sort of fashion to the yards. We had escaped the doom of many a fine ship, whose crew have paid the penalty of carelessness with their lives. It was long, however, before we overtook the labour which those few hours involved us in. For many days we jogged along under easy sail, getting farther and farther to the northward every day, happily for us, and so putting a greater distance between us and bad weather.

## 16

*Up the Indian Ocean to Bombay*

At certain seasons of the year the minds of mariners navigating the Indian Ocean are always, more or less, upon the tension of expectancy concerning the possibility of their encountering one of those tremendous meteors known as cyclones. A keen watch is continually kept upon the mercury in the barometer for any deviation from its normal ebb and flow, which occurs with the greatest regularity in the tropics during settled weather. For these truly awful storms are so justly dreaded, by even the bravest seaman, that no danger of navigation claims more attention. The possibility of meeting, or being overtaken by one, bulks largely in the dog-watch discussions among the foremast hands, and he who has successfully braved an encounter with a cyclone, speaks

with an authority denied to his fellows who have never had such a painful experience. Even to me, juvenile as I was, an almost deferential hearing was accorded when I spoke of my Havana experience—the hurricane of the West Indies, the typhoon of the China seas, and the cyclone of the Indian Ocean being only different names for the same mighty atmospheric convulsion. Happily, our leisurely progress northward was unattended by any such deeply perilous adventure as the encounter with a cyclone would have been. Doubts were freely expressed as to the probability of the *Western Belle* weathering one at any time, but especially under our present short-handed conditions. Every day, therefore, that passed seeing us nearer port was noted with delight, as lessening our chances of utter extermination. And when at last we passed the latitude of Cape Comorin and entered the Arabian Sea, there was a distinct lightening of faces and a tendency to make little of the weary passage now gradually nearing its end. We did not see a vessel of any description, during our journey from the Cape, until within two hundred miles of Bombay, neither did we sight any land. But one morning, to my amazement, I saw a vessel nearing us unlike any I had ever seen before—except in pictures. She had a hull like the half of an egg cut lengthways, and was propelled by an enormous white sail of lateen shape, or almost like one of our jibs. She could not have been more than ten or fifteen tons capacity, and how she stood up under such an immense spread of sail was a mystery. She came flying along like a huge sea-bird, shooting up almost in the wind's eye, and presently, graceful as an albatross, rounded-to under our stern and 'spilled' her sail. Seated in the after part of this queer craft were two or three dignified-looking men in white raiment, with the peculiar stiff headgear affected by Parsees. One of the black, unclad natives forming her crew hooked on to our fore-chains, and, with an agility I should have hardly believed possible, one of the white-robed visitors seized a rope flung over the side and skipped on board. Speaking correct English, he saluted the mate, who stood at the gangway; then hastened aft, and, making a low salaam to the skipper, solicited the honour of being our 'dubash,' or general purveyor, while we were in harbour. To his great disappointment, however, Captain Smith was an old Bombay trader, and always employed the same dubash; so that, after a few compliments, our visitor politely took his leave, hoping for better luck next time.

Thenceforward we met many native craft, or 'buggalows,' as they call them, lumbering along the coast on various errands, all characterized by a general makeshift appearance that made me wonder however they dared brave the dangers of the sea at all.

But that is a peculiarity of all Eastern native craft. They are things of shreds and patches, and look as seaworthy as a waggon with a worn-out tarpaulin set. Most of them creep along shore pretty closely, and, at night, lower their wooden anchors down about twenty fathoms, furl sail, and turn in—or, at least, go to sleep. She is pretty safe to fetch up somewhere, and time doesn't matter. If she gets run down by some bustling ship or another, it is Kismet, and not to be helped.

At last we drew near Bombay—that Liverpool of the East—the first sight of which is so amazing to an untravelled Briton. I was almost stupefied with wonder at the mighty stream of traffic, the immense fleet of ships that lay at anchor in the magnificent harbour, and the beauty of the great city. We had shipped a white pilot, who, being anxious to get up to the anchorage before dusk, and make one job of the mooring, was 'cracking on' to an exceedingly stiff breeze, making the old ship heel over alarmingly. Suddenly I heard my name called. Running aft, I was met by the second mate, who, handing me a coil of line, ordered me to go up and reeve the signal halliards in the mizzen truck. Now, I should premise that, like all American-built ships, we carried very long 'royal poles,' or bare tapering extensions of the masts above the highest part of the rigging. Ours were extra long—some sixteen feet or so—and crowned at the top, which was not much thicker than a man's wrist, with a flat piece of wood about as large as a cheese-plate, in one side of which was a sheave for the signal halliards or flag-line. I started aloft boldly enough; but when I reached the base of the pole, and saw to what a height its bareness towered above me, while the staggering ship lurched to leeward and the foaming sea roared a hundred and twenty feet below, my heart failed me, my head swam, and all my scanty stock of strength left me. For some time I sat with my legs clutched round the pole, just clinging, without power to move. Then I heard the voice of the second mate pealing up from the deck. 'Hurry up there with those halliards!' Strange as it may appear, although I felt that I was going to certain death, my fear of him was so great that I made the attempt. Pulling myself up, I shut my eyes and murmured a prayer. Trembling in every nerve, but fighting against my benumbing weakness, I actually struggled to the top. As I write, the cold sweat bursts from every pore, for I feel again the terrible agony of that moment. Opening my eyes, I thrust at the opening of the sheave with the end of the line; but it was knotted, and would not go through. I *had* tried and failed, and with my last flash of energy I grasped the pole again in both arms, and slid down on to the eyes of the royal rigging. Here I clung for a few minutes to recover myself, and to be violently sick; then,

feeling as if the bitterness of death was past, I descended to the deck, walked up to Mr Cottam, and said, 'I have tried, and I can't do it, sir—not if you kill me.' He stared at me blankly for a moment. Then turning away, as if the situation was beyond him, he called my constant chum, Bill Smith, and gave him the job. He, being strong as a bear and agile as a monkey, very soon managed it; not without considerable grumbling at Jemmy for sending a 'weakly kid' like me on such an errand. The whole episode may seem trivial; but I frankly declare that having, in my experience, faced death many times, I have never felt such terror as I did then.

We made a 'flying moor' in fine style, in spite of the great fleet of ships surrounding us, the sails were furled, decks cleared up, and all hands dismissed forrard to meditate upon the successful close of our passage of seven months from Liverpool. Soon everybody's attention was drawn to a large ship near by, whose crew were weighing anchor, homeward bound. It was the *Stornoway*, the vessel we had seen towing into Liverpool as we left. She had discharged and loaded in Liverpool, made her passage out, and now, having discharged and loaded in Bombay, was returning again. Such differences there are between sailing ships.

The morning brought a chattering crowd of coolies carrying little shallow baskets and short hoes. At first, the idea of discharging two thousand tons of coal by such childish means seemed absurd, and, when a start was made, impossible. For the poor wretches—men, women, and children—did not appear to have the faintest idea of working, or to possess enough strength to do more than carry their attenuated bodies about. But they were formed into lines, from the hatches to the gangways, and, while some scratched the coal into the baskets with the hoes, the rest passed them from hand to hand to a monotonous chant of 'Jal marck ooday, jal marck oodaylecallah, jal marck ooday.' The spelling, of course, is phonetic, and I haven't the faintest idea what it meant. So mechanically did they 'puckarow' those baskets, that often one would pass from the hatch to the gangway empty, the coolie on the rail going through the motions of tilting it over into the lighter and returning it. In any case, I do not think the average weight of coal passed in a basket was seven pounds. Yet somehow the lighters got filled. There was such a number of coolies, and the passing was so incessant, that it was bound to tell. The crew, apart from the discomfort of the all-pervading coal-dust, had a very good time, as little work being required of them as possible. And, while a plentiful allowance of fresh meat and vegetables was provided by the ship, there was also a bumboat in attendance that kept the men well supplied, at their own cost, with fruit, eggs,

etc. I was fortunate enough again to be bookkeeper, receiving in return as much fruit as I wanted.

Except on Sundays, matters went on in a very humdrum style, the only incident out of the common being a picnic excursion to the rock-temples of Elephanta. But I have no intention of describing such places, that, indeed, are as well known to readers as the Isle of Wight. My object is a totally different one. On Sundays I should think the bulk of the trading population got afloat, and came ship-visiting. If our ship's deck was a fair sample of those of the rest of the fleet, there could have been little merchandise left in the bazaars. From the cabin to the forecabin the decks were almost impassable for the piles of curios of all kinds—clothes, cigars, birds, etc. The bulk of the stuff was dreadful rubbish, almost worthless, in fact; yet, owing to the ignorance of sailors of what can be bought in decent shops at home, the trash fetched high prices, at least double what really good articles of the same style and place of origin could be bought for in London. And, in addition to that, by a system nothing short of robbery, each man was charged two shillings and fourpence for every rupee he drew against his hardly earned wages, while at that time the rupee was quoted officially at one shilling and eightpence. Who pocketed the eightpence, I do not know; but I shrewdly suspect that it was considered, like the backsheesh levied from the tailor and the bumboat-wallah, the captain's legitimate perquisite. I have known a captain pocket fifty rupees off a bumboat bill of two hundred and fifty, and, of course, the keen-witted Hindu based his charges to the men on the expectation of such a tax; so that Jack was robbed on every hand, unless he sternly made up his mind to spend nothing 'in the country.' And, as not one in a hundred sailors have such resolution as that, there are some very pretty pickings out of their scanty wages.

The time sped swiftly away, and soon the coal was all out and most of the stone ballast in. No cargo was obtainable for us in Bombay, so we were ordered to proceed to Bimlipatam on the Coromandel coast, and after that to Coconade to complete. But, before our departure, the time-honoured custom of giving the crew twenty-four hours' liberty must be observed. Consequently the mate's watch duly received twenty rupees each, and, dressed in their best, started for the shore one morning at eight o'clock. All of them returned the following morning except Bradley, the hirsute Bluenose who lost my fish for me on the passage out. But oh! what a pitiful, dirty, draggled lot they were. And, in spite of their miserable condition, they must needs get up several fights among themselves in order to crown the delights they had been indulging in ashore. It was quite out of the question to allow the

second mate's watch ashore that day; and this decision nearly caused our first serious row, so eager were the other half of the crew to go and do even as their fellows had done. But as there was nothing to prevent the petty officers going, they all furbished up and started, taking us two boys with them. My chum Bill Smith was of the party; but as soon as we landed he went off with me, being far too old a hand to be led by anybody. Of course, poor fellow! having no wages, he had to contrive to earn a little by washing, etc., and every copper was carefully hoarded for the Bombay bazaars, where, he informed me, better bargains in clothes could be got than anywhere in London. Up and down the crowded lanes of the bazaar he led me, driving away with contumely the pilots who offered to personally conduct us for a consideration, and fingering the goods of the various shopkeepers with the air of one who is bursting with wealth. At last, finding a booth to his mind, he entered, and forthwith selected a great heap of things: such as soldier's trousers, woollen shirts, dungaree jumpers and trousers, towels, caps, soap—in fact, a regular outfit. At last the middle-aged Mussulman who ran the show began to look suspicious, and said, 'You got plenty rupee, Johnny?' 'I've got all I want, Johnny,' said he. 'Gimme jar o' ginger. *Ginger*, mind; none o' yer m'lasses.' The ginger was brought and added to the heap. 'Then Bill said, 'Now then, Johnny, how much for the lot?' A portentous calculation ensued, which occupied, I should think, twenty minutes. At last the account was made up—forty-five rupees. Without moving a muscle of his face, Bill immediately replied, 'I'll give you ten.' Horror, amazement, indignation, chased one another over the countenances of the shopkeepers. At last one of them found words. 'You make plenty laugh, Johnny; speakee barabba one time. Gib forty rupee.' 'Not another pice,' said Bill, pulling out his money and counting it ostentatiously. Well, the antics those two natives did cut, to be sure! They worked themselves up into a foaming rage, they cast their turbans recklessly in the dust; in such English as they could command they reviled their tormentor and all his relations to the remotest degree, and finally came down to thirty rupees. That, they swore with sudden solemnity, was absolutely the bottom figure, at which they would lose at least five rupees on the transaction. 'Oh, very well,' said Bill, 'then I'm off.' And rising, he said, 'Come along, Tom.' Out we went, and strolled leisurely along the alley for about a hundred yards, when suddenly one of the merchants came flying after us, and, with many smiles, besought Bill to return and 'speakee barabba' now. Back we went, and the game began again. I got thoroughly weary of it at last; but Bill's patience was inexhaustible. He was rewarded, finally, by their absolute submission



to his terms, when, to my consternation, he refused to have the goods unless they gave him a large bottle of pepper as backsheesh. Surely, I thought, this will so disgust them that they will assault us. But no; after another quarter of an hour's haggling they yielded the last point, and, laden like a sumpter mule, Bill took his triumphant departure.

By this time I had seen more than enough of the steaming hubbub of the bazaars. But Bill had more business to transact; so we parted company; and I wandered away alone, gazing with wide-eyed wonder at the innumerable strange sights to be seen in this great humming city. No one molested me, although many curious glances were cast at me by groups of languid natives, of all shades, as I trudged along without any definite idea whither I was going. At last, utterly weary, I found myself down at the water's edge again. The afternoon was getting on, and I should soon have to return on board; but as I had still two rupees, I thought I would like a trip up the harbour to Mazagan, or beyond it. Full of my project, I chartered a canoe with two men in it to take me for a sail, bargaining, as well as I was able, in my ignorance of the language, for a two hours' sail, ending on board my ship. We started, and, for perhaps half an hour, I thoroughly enjoyed myself, as the canoe glided along right up past the P. and O. moorings and the Arsenal. Then, when we were clear of the shipping, my boatmen suddenly stopped and began an animated discussion with me, which was somewhat complicated by the fact that neither of us understood the other. Eventually I became convinced that they wanted more money, and their previously mild behaviour grew certainly aggressive. I felt very nervous, but struggled to conceal the fact, speaking boldly, as if accustomed to be obeyed. Finally I produced my money, and turned my pockets inside out to show that I had no more. Upon seeing this they held a long conversation, during which the canoe drifted idly and I sat upon thorns. At last, much to my relief, they turned the boat's head towards the anchorage again, and, without another word, paddled homeward. Arriving about a cable's length from the ship they stopped, and demanded their money. But I, having seen the stalwart figure of the mate standing on the forecastle head, stood up, and, with all the voice I could muster, shouted, '*Western Belle*, ahoy!' Mr. Edny heard me and waved his hand. This move on my part evidently disconcerted them, and they paddled vigorously for the gangway. As soon as the canoe touched the side, I sprang up and told Mr. Edny what had happened. He asked me what I had promised them. I told him one rupee. Taking eight annas from me, he went down the gangway and offered it to them. When they set up a perfect storm of protests,

he just pitched the piece of money into the canoe and pushed it away from the side, returning on board without taking any further notice. Needless to say, I was heartily thankful to be well out of what at one time looked like an ugly scrape.

Next morning the liberty men returned on board in the usual condition, but Bradley was not with them. That night, however, he paid us a visit by stealth, coming up the cable and rifling several of his shipmates' chests of whatever was worth carrying off. Then he went ashore again unperceived, showing what a very slack watch was kept. There was consternation in the fore-castle when the robbery was discovered, and a good deal of wild talk; but Bradley was something of a 'bucko', and I very much doubt whether any of them would have said much to him had he been there in person. Three days longer we remained at anchor, although apparently quite ready for sea. On the second morning Bradley returned, and climbing on board, walked aft and coolly asked the mate for a rupee to pay his boatman with. Being curtly refused and ordered forward, he stripped off the filthy white shirt he was wearing, and rolling it up, flung it over to the dinghy-wallah, bidding him to 'Kinnaree jao, jildee' (get ashore quick). With this the poor beggar was perforce content, making off hurriedly. Bradley then made for his bunk, saying no word to any one until the afternoon, when he bade Julius Cæsar go and tell the skipper that he was very ill. This message actually made the old man angry. He came forward and gave the defaulter a piece of his mind; but being evidently impressed by the look of the man, who had been gutter-raking in all the filth of 'coolie town' for three days, he sent for the harbour doctor. That worthy, after examination, gave it as his opinion that there was nothing the matter with the fellow but bad gin and want of food, assuring the skipper that he would be all right, as soon as we got to sea.

Next morning we got under way and sailed, not without another protest from Bradley, of which no notice was taken, as the medical officer, who was then paying his final visit, adhered to his opinion. We took a favourable wind at the harbour's mouth, and slid gently down the coast under easy sail, the vessel being 'tender' from scanty allowance of ballast. But the weather was lovely, the wind fair, and everything promised a delightful trip. Bradley, however, steadily got worse. Presently an angry-looking eruption of pimples burst out all over his body, even the inside of his mouth being invaded. Then my purgatory commenced. No one would have anything to do with him, although he was quite helpless. He was shifted out of the fore-castle up on to the fore-castle-head, and a sort of tent rigged over him to keep the sun off. Then I was told off to attend to him. The horror of that time will

never leave me. He was, as I have before noted, with the exception of the mate, the most hairy man I ever saw, the black shaggy covering of his arms and legs being at least an inch and a half long, while his chest and back were more like a great ape's than a man's. Therefore, when all those pimples grew until they were large as a finger-top, and so close together that not a speck of sound flesh was visible, the task of washing him, which I had to perform alone, was really an awful one. I must draw a veil over the further development of those horrible pustules. . . . Happily for the patient he became delirious and apparently insensible to pain. How I kept my reason I don't know; but I thought, and still think, that it was a frightful ordeal for a youngster under fourteen to endure for a whole week. I had nothing else to do; no relief, except my ordinary watch below, during which he was left quite alone. On the eleventh day after leaving Bombay we entered Bimlipatam Roads, and just as we did so death mercifully came to his rescue and mine. The carpenter botched up a rough coffin, into which the unrecognizable heap, with all its bedding, was hurriedly bundled, taken ashore, and buried at the foot of the flagstaff without any ceremony whatever. No one seemed to know what the disease had been; but I can only say that having seen lepers in all stages of disfigurement, and many other cases of terrible pestilential ravages, I have never seen anything so awful as the case of William Bradley.

## 17

*On the Coromandel Coast*

FREED from that horrible incubus, I had now leisure to look about and enjoy the varied scenes that presented themselves. The place we were lying at was, I suppose, a typical native coast village, a big hill facing the anchorage having a rock-hewn temple upon its sea-front. There was no harbour or shelter of any kind, so that vessels lay all ready for sea in case of bad weather setting in. All cargo was brought off in the crazy 'massulah' boats, which have been so often described by visitors to Madras, and are the only craft able to stand the rough usage of the surf-beaten beach. The fishermen went out on primitive contrivances of three logs lashed together without any attempt at hollowing out or fashioning bow and stern. Kneeling upon the two outer logs in the centre of the crazy thing, the poor wretch would paddle seaward until out of sight, his sole equipment a palm-leaf basket secured just in front of him, and containing his fishing tackle. Neither food nor water could be carried, yet in this miserable condition they would

remain out for many hours, at the mercy of every wave that came along, and often being rolled over several times in succession. The catches of fish they made were always pitifully small, it seemed to me, sometimes consisting of only a couple of dozen large prawns, though how they caught *them* out there was a mystery to me.

Our cargo was an assorted one. Jaggery, or palm sugar—looking like bags of black mud, and almost as nice to handle,—buffalo horns and hides, cases of castor oil, bags of myrabolums (a kind of dye-nut), and sundry other queer things came off to us in small quantities at a time, and were flung on board in a most haphazard fashion, owing to the constant swell, which made the boats tumble about alongside vivaciously. All the stowage was done by the crew under the direction of Jemmy the Scrubber, who proved himself as capable a stevedore as he was a seaman. No one went ashore except the skipper while we lay there, and he would gladly have avoided the necessity, if possible, since it usually meant a thorough drenching. On the whole, we were by no means sorry when the news came that we were to leave and proceed down the coast to Coconada. As we were always ready to sail, there were none of the usual preliminaries; we just hauled in the fenders, hove the anchor up, and started. Here our skipper's local knowledge was of great service. For we hugged the coast closely all the way down, keeping a favourable wind, which brought us into Coconada Bay in a few hours, while the *Andromeda*, a big Liverpool ship that sailed at the same time for the same port, stood off the land, got into bad weather, and did not arrive for twenty-eight days. She had also sustained severe damage to both ship and cargo.

While Coconada was evidently a much more important place than Bimlipatam, we saw nothing of the town, for we lay a long way off in the centre of a huge bay. We were near enough, though, to hear the various cries of the wild beasts, among which the hideous noise of the hyenas was especially noticeable. Our unhappy painter, who had remained in Bombay hospital during the whole of our stay there, was again so ill that he had to be landed here. But, getting convalescent, he and a fellow patient went for a stroll one day, and, wandering out of the town, they met a hyena. Barber was so scared that he fainted right away, but the other man found sufficient vitality to scramble up a tree. He had not got very high, though, before weakness overcame him, and he fell, breaking his leg. When Barber came to there was no trace of the hyena, but he and his fellow were in a pitiful plight. There they would doubtless have stopped, and had their bones picked clean by the morning, but for a party of friendly coolies who came

along, and, seeing their condition, fetched a couple of 'palkees' and carried them back to hospital again.

Here, then, we remained for three weeks, filling the hold with a miscellaneous collection of Indian produce, of which cotton, linseed, and myrabolums formed the staple, until the great capacity of our ship for cargo was effectually satisfied, and she was jammed full to the hatch coamings. Then all hands, released from their stifling labours below, bent their energies to getting ready for sea. Meanwhile, although our crew were certainly a most patient set of men, their discontent at the short-handedness, which ever since leaving home had pressed so hardly upon us all, gathered to a head, culminating in a visit of all hands to the quarter-deck with a request to see the skipper. Genial as ever, Captain Smith appeared, his ruddy face wearing an expression of benign wonderment at the unusual summons. 'Well, what is it, men?' said he. Then stepped forward an elderly Yankee, who had been a bo'sun's mate in the American navy, a shrewd, intelligent man with a rich fund of native humour, and a prime favourite fore and aft. 'We've taken the libbaty, sir, ov comin' aft t'ask ye ef it's your intenshun ter sail 'thout shippin' enny more hands?' was his reply. 'Well, in the first place, Nat,' answered the skipper, 'there's no hands ter be got here, an' besides, in sech a easy-workin' ship as this is, there's no hardship in bein' a cupple o' hands short.' 'The good Lawd fergive ye, sir!' exclaimed Nat; 'ef thishyers a heasy-workin' ship, what mout ye reckon a *hard*-workin' one 'ud be like? Why, cap'n, it takes two men to haul thro' the slack ov th' braces, an' it's all a man's work to overhaul the gear of a to'gantsle. 'Sides, sir, yew know it takes all hands to shorten her down to the taupsles, 'n what we k'n do with her in a squall—well, I hain't fergot thet plesant evenin' off the Cape ef yew have.' At this vigorous reply the old man could only laugh to show his appreciation of the home-thrusts it contained, but with native shrewdness he changed his base, still preserving his cheery good temper. 'Mind ye, I don't say we ain't short-handed,' he said—'very short-handed; but we're gettin' out ov the Bay o' Bengal 'fore the sou-west monsoon sets in, 'n yew know 's well 's me that it's fine weather 'mos' all the way ter the Cape once we cross the line. 'N if we git enny dirt offn the Cape I'll keep her under easy sail, 'n let the 'Gulhas current sweep her roun', 'n then we'll jest be home in no time. Yew leav' it t' me. We hain't been eight months together 'thout knowin' each other, 'n yew all know yew k'n depend on me to do the best I k'n ter make ye comfortable. But I *can't* get any hands in this God-forsaken place if we only had two left forrard.' That speech settled it. If Captain Smith had been an irritable man, inclined to put on airs of outraged dignity

because his crew asked him a perfectly reasonable question, and to rate them like a set of factious children, there would have been an instant refusal of duty on the part of the men, followed by much suffering and loss on both sides, for the chaps were thoroughly in earnest. But the skipper's frank good-humour and acceptance of the situation disarmed them, and they returned forward with minds made up to see the voyage out as best they could. Next day we weighed anchor and sailed for London, the windlass revolving to the time-honoured tune of 'Good-bye, fare-you-well; hurrah, my boys, we're homeward bound.'

Just prior to our departure we received on board some two or three hundred fowls and two goats, which, added to about twenty pigs—mostly bred on board, two large dogs, two monkeys, sundry parrots and two cats, made the ship bear no bad resemblance to Noah's Ark. None of these animals had any settled abiding place; they just roamed about the decks whithersoever they would, except on the sacred precincts of the poop, which were faithfully guarded by one of the dogs, who allowed no intrusion by any of the grunting, clucking or chattering crowd. But this state of things was a great trial to all concerned. For one of the cardinal necessities of British or American ships is cleanliness, which is secured by copious floods of salt water, and vigorous scrubbing every morning. Under present conditions keeping the vessel clean was manifestly impossible, the crowd of animals even invading the men's quarters, as well as every nook into which they could possibly squeeze themselves. There was a great deal of dissatisfaction forward at this state of things, and fowls were continually flying overboard, being chased and smitten by angry men, who found everything under their hands befouled and stinking. Still the nuisance was unabated until we were ten days out. Just off Cape Comorin we got our first stiff breeze of the homeward passage, and very soon, in accordance with her invariable custom, the old ship began to take sufficient water over the rail to flood the decks fore and aft. Then there was a commotion in the farmyard. The watch, up to their waists in water, splashed about collecting the squawking chickens, and, driving the bewildered swine into a temporary shelter, rigged up under the topgallant forecastle. Next morning at least four dozen dead fowls were flung overboard, in addition to many that had fled blindly into the sea on the previous day. This loss so disgusted the skipper that he ordered all hands to be fed on poultry until the stock was exhausted. At first this benevolent (?) command gave a good deal of delight, but when the miserable, leathery carcasses, boiled in salt water, unclean and unsavoury, were brought into the forecastle, there was almost a riot. A deputation waited upon the captain to protest and demand their proper rations

of 'salt horse.' They were received by the skipper with a very ill grace, and the usual senseless remarks about sailors' fastidiousness in the matter of food were freely indulged in by the 'old man,' who seemed quite out of temper. We got no more Coromandel poultry, though, which was a blessing, albeit they were served up to the cabin as usual. Being prepared in a civilized fashion, I suppose, the officers found them eatable. But in various ways the flock of fowls diminished rapidly, much to our relief, and gradually the decks began to assume their normal cleanliness. The pigs, numerous as they were, could be kept within bounds forward; in fact, the dogs rarely permitted them to come abaft the foremast. As for the two goats, they grew so mischievous, gnawing the ends of all the ropes, and nibbling at everything except iron, that orders for their execution went forth, and since no one would eat them, their bodies were flung overboard.

## 18

*Homeward to London*

As Captain Smith had foretold, we were having an exceedingly fine-weather passage. All the way down the Indian Ocean we were favoured with pleasant breezes, fair for our course, and glorious weather. Every care was taken to make the work as light as possible for the small crew, although we in the starboard watch were sorely exasperated by the second mate's devotion to sand and canvas—a mania that had given him his well-earned sobriquet of 'Jemmy the Scrubber.' If he could only have his watch slopping about with a few buckets of sand and rags of old canvas, rubbing away at the dingy interior of the bulwarks, that with all his attentions never *would* look white, he was in his glory. But oh! how we did hate the messy, fiddling abomination. It made our discontent the greater to notice that the mate's watch scarcely ever touched it. Like a sensible man, Mr. Edny preferred to have one thoroughly good scrub down at lengthy intervals, going over the whole of the paint in one day, to scratching like a broody hen, first here and then there, in patches, and never making a decent job after all. It kept the watch in a chronic state of growl, which was only prevented from breaking out into downright rebellion by the knowledge that the second mate was always in hot water aft, although, owing to his seven years' service in the ship, the skipper and mate allowed him to have pretty much his own way. Apart from this, things went on smoothly enough. Many a time did Jemmy, with only such assistance as Bill and I could give him, set and take in the lighter sails without disturbing the rest of the watch,

who were fast asleep in their several bunks. They knew this well, and consequently never turned out, even upon the most urgent necessity, without a chorus of growls at the second mate, although he never took the slightest notice of them.

So we slowly lumbered homeward in uneventful monotony, until one morning we made the land about East London, and congratulated ourselves that we were near the southern limit of our journey home. Still the weather was kind to us. No envious southerly gale battered us back from the Cape we were striving to get round, and presently we found ourselves in the embrace of the great Agulhas current that for ever sets steadily round the Cape westward. Homeward bounders have reason to rejoice when they enter the limits of this mighty marine river, for, in spite of contrary winds or calms, they are irresistibly carried on the way they would go at a rate that is the same for the bluff-bowed sea-waggon as for the ocean-flyer. And one day, to my intense delight—for I had heard a tale from Bill—the wind died completely away and the water became as smooth as a mirror. Every bit of line in the ship that could by any possibility serve as a fishing-line was ferreted out, and fishing commenced. At first only the favoured few, whose lines were fifty or sixty fathoms long, got a look-in, bringing up from the bank far below us some magnificent specimens of cod. Then, as the fish followed their disappearing comrades up, the shorter lines came into play, and the fun became general. It was a regular orgie of fishing. At least three hundred splendid fish of various kinds, but chiefly cod, rewarded our efforts, the subsequent feast being something to date from. Better still, the weather being cool, we were able to salt down a large quantity for use later on, so that we had fish for nearly a month afterwards. After about eight hours of this calm a gentle south-easterly breeze sprang up, which persisted and strengthened, until, with the dim outlines of the high land behind the Cape of Good Hope on our starboard quarter, we were bowling cheerily along under every rag we could muster, our head pointing north-north-west, homeward-bound indeed.

Then the work that must be undertaken in every respectable ship on the 'home-stretch' came with a rush. Setting up rigging, rattling down, general overhaul of running and standing gear, chipping iron-work and painting it with red lead, scraping bright woodwork, etc., etc., kept us all busy, although we were allowed watch and watch all along. In most ships it is the custom while in the south-east trades, homeward-bound, to give no afternoon watch below in order that the bulk of the 'redding-up' may be done before crossing the line. But for several reasons our skipper did not think it advisable to tax his scanty crew too much. As for



attendance on the sails, we might have been a steamship for all the work of that kind required—the ‘south-east trades’ being notoriously steady and reliable in the Atlantic, while the north-east trades are often entirely wanting. So we had trades, from the Cape to the line, that did not vary a point in force or direction for three weeks; and, if she would have steered herself, she could have made that part of the passage unmanned. The time literally flew by, being delightfully punctuated every Sunday by a glorious feed of roast pig—two of our large stock of home-bred porkers being sacrificed each Saturday, and fairly apportioned among all hands.

St. Helena was sighted ten days after losing sight of the African land—a huge black mass, towering to an enormous height, as it seemed to me. We approached it very closely, purposing to report ourselves there, but not to anchor. Coming round under the huge crags of the southern end with all sail set, we had a splendid view of the cliffs, rising sheer from the sea, whereon the gliding shadow of our ship was cast in almost perfect resemblance. Who was responsible for the neglect, I do not know, but suddenly down a gorge in the mountain rushed a fierce blast almost at right angles to the wind we were carrying, and making the canvas shake and flap with a thunderous noise. There was a great bustle to get sail off her, but unfortunately she paid off rather smartly, and *crack* went the mizzen-topmast before the sails came down. A piece of gross carelessness! for no coast of that kind should ever be approached under sail without all due precautions for shortening down. Neglect of such preparation has caused the loss of many a fine ship and countless boats, with appalling sacrifice of life. It was the only spar we lost during the whole of that voyage.

By the time we had got the kites off her we had opened out the great gorge, in which, as if it had been dropped from the cliffs above, lies the town, the houses appearing curiously jumbled together. We were so close in that the great ladder, credited, I believe, with a rung for every day in the year, which leads up on to the cliffs from the town, was plainly visible. Only one ship, the *Noach VIII*, of Rotterdam, one of the regular old Dutch East Indiamen from Java, was at anchor, for even then the prosperous days of St. Helena as a sort of ocean ‘half-way house’ had departed, never to return. We spelt out our name and ports of departure and destination with the length of passage, our information being duly acknowledged from the flag-staff. In a few minutes more we were again in the grip of our faithful friend the south-east trade, and feeling that another important milestone was passed on our long journey. Placidly, equably, we jogged on, four days afterwards sighting and signalling to the barren volcano-scarred island of

Ascension, the exclusive domain of men-o'-war, for whose behalf a large naval establishment is maintained in highest efficiency. Another landmark left behind. Onward we sped with freshening trades and increasing speed until we were actually in eight degrees north latitude, so kindly had the fair wind we took off the pitch of the Cape favoured us. But our good fortune still held. Instead of at least a week of the detestable doldrums we fully expected, we had only one day's detention before the north-east trades swept down upon us, and away we went, braced sharp up on the starboard tack to the north-westward. And now for a while, all the tarry work being done, all hands were transformed into painters and varnishers. Within and without also, as far as the wash of the sea alongside would allow, we painted and polished, until the grimy, once shabby old packet looked quite smart and shining. The second mate was right in his element. He begrudged himself necessary rest, and often looked angrily at the sun when setting, as if he felt he was being defrauded out of a few minutes more of his beloved labour. Never surely was there a man who loved work for its own sake better than he. Never had a ship a more energetic seamanlike officer. Yet he was by no means appreciated aft, although his worth was undeniable. And as so often happens, he was doomed to be a junior officer all his life, for he could not do the simplest problem in navigation without making the most ludicrous mistakes. However he 'passed' for second mate was a mystery known only to the examiners. Mainly, I believe, by his untiring efforts, all our painting operations were successfully completed before we reached the northern verge of the tropic, where changeable weather began to appear. But, when once the paint was on, he was like a hen with one chick. His eager eye was ever on the watch for any unfortunate who should dare to sully the whiteness of the bulwarks within, or heave anything overboard carelessly that might mark the glossy blackness outside. But his great carnival was yet to come. One morning shortly after four, under his directions, I lugged up from the fore-peak a number of lumps of sandstone, which he busied himself till daylight in shaping into sizeable blocks, while I pounded the smaller pieces into sand. Promptly at four bells the watch were gathered aft, and 'holystoning' commenced. This delightful pastime consists of rubbing the decks, along the grain of the wood, with blocks of sandstone, the process being assisted by scattered sand and water. For three days the decks were in a continual muck of muddy sand, and Jemmy's face wore a steady, beaming smile. When, at last, all the grit was flooded away, the result was dazzling. The decks were really beautiful in their spotless cleanliness. Then, to my unbounded amazement, no sooner were they dry, than a vile

mixture of varnish, oil, and coal-tar, was boiled in an impromptu furnace on deck, and with this hideous compost the spotless planks were liberally besmeared. I felt personally aggrieved. 'Why'—I could not help asking my chum Bill—'why, in the name of goodness all this back-breaking holystoning only to plaster such a foul mess on the decks immediately afterward?' 'Preserves the wood,' was the sententious reply, and it was all the answer I could get. Certainly the poop was varnished only, which made it a fine golden hue until the first water was poured on it. After that it always looked as if a lot of soapsuds had been poured over it and left to dry.

But with this final outrage on common sense, as I couldn't help considering it, our ship-decorating came to an end. Henceforth the chief object in view apparently was to preserve, as far as possible, the spick and span appearance of the vessel until she reached home. Those beautiful decks, especially, were the objects of Jemmy's constant solicitude. He found some nailmarks one day left by somebody's boots, and one would have thought the ship had sprung a leak like a well-mouth by the outcry he made. As far as possible work was confined to the fore part of the ship, and beside the ordinary routine little was done but the plaiting of rope yarns into sennit—always a kill-time. But we were now so far north that the variable weather of the North Atlantic began to give us plenty of occupation in the working of the ship. Fortunately we were not long delayed by contrary winds. The brave westerlies came to our assistance, driving us along in fine style and at increasing speed, until one day through the driving mist we sighted Corvo, one of the northern outposts of the Azores. It was fortunate that we did so, for thenceforward thickening weather and overcast skies prevented any observation of the heavenly bodies, and 'dead reckoning' was our only means of knowing the ship's position. Now Captain Smith, though thoroughly at home on the Indian coasts, had a great dread of his own shores, and as the distance from land grew less he became exceedingly nervous, until at last, when by his estimate we were well up Channel, he dared no longer run as fast as the following gale would have driven him, but shortened sail, much to every one else's disgust. Ship after ship came up astern, passed us, and sped away homewards, while we dawdled through those crowded waters, running the risk of the fair wind blowing itself out before we had gained our port. Before we had sighted land or light it came down a thick fog—a regular Channel fret—which is a condition of things dreaded by all seamen on our dangerous coasts. We hove-to, keeping the foghorn going with its melancholy bray. Thus for six mortal hours we lay helplessly tossing in the fairway, listening to the miserable

discord of foghorns, syrens, and whistles, but unable to see the ship's length away from us. The anxiety was exceedingly great, for at any moment we were liable to be run down by something or another, whose commander was more venturesome than ours. Suddenfly out of the gloom came a hoarse hail, 'D'ye want a pilot, sir?' A sweeter sound was never heard. Without a moment's hesitation the old man replied, 'Yes, where are you?' He had hardly spoken before the dim outlines of a lugger came into view close alongside. 'Are you a Trinity pilot?' asked the skipper. 'No, sir, but I can run you up to him,' replied the voice. 'How much?' queried the captain. 'Five pounds, sir!' came promptly back. 'All right, come aboard!' said the old man, and all hands crowded to the side to see our deliverer from suspense. 'Heave us a line, please, sir!' came up from the darkness, where we could see the shadowy form of the big boat tossing and tumbling in the heavy sea. The main brace was flung out to her, and, as she sheered in towards us, a black bundle seemed to hurl itself at us, and in a few seconds it stood erect and dripping on deck—a man swathed in oilskins till he looked like a mummy. Only pausing to dash the water out of his eyes, he shouted, 'Square the mainyard!' and walking aft to the helmsman ordered him to 'Keep her away.' A minute before all had been miserable in the extreme, and the bitter gale roaring overhead seemed to be withering all the life out of us. But what a change! The man seemed to have brought fine weather with him; the perfect confidence that every one had in him dispelling every gloomy thought. The lesson of that little episode, so commonplace, yet so full of instruction, has never been forgotten by me. It is so palpable that I dare not enlarge upon it.

Meanwhile one of the lugger's crew had followed his chief, and was busy begging tobacco, meat, and anything else the steward could find to part with. When he had got all he could, the lugger sheered in again, and he tumbled back on board with his booty. Very soon the fog cleared away, and as soon as it did so we saw the light on Dungeness close aboard. We ran up to the pilot's cruising ground and hove-to, burning a blue light as a signal, while our friendly hoveller pocketed his five pounds and departed, well pleased with his four hours' earnings. These men get called some very hard names, and may perhaps occasionally deserve them; but as long as sailing-ships exist they will be found, as we undoubtedly found one, a very present help in time of need and the salvation of many a fine ship.

The Trinity pilot was some time making his appearance, for there were many ships about, and we must needs await our turn. But in due time we were supplied, the yards were again squared, and away we went around the Foreland. Presently there was a

welcome sound of paddle-wheels, and up came a tug anxious for the job of towing us up to London. But our captain's Scotch economy forbade him to take steam while there was so much fair wind going for nothing; and the subsequent haggling was almost as protracted as Bill's celebrated feat in Bombay. At last, after two or three departures of the tug in fits of irritation, a bargain was struck, and the ever-welcome command came peeling forward, 'Get the hawser along!' No need to call all hands. Everybody came on the jump, and that mighty rope was handled as if it had been a lead-line. In a wonderfully short time the end was passed to the tug, a severe turn was taken with our end round the windlass bitts, and with what the sailor calls 'a fair wind ahead,' we went spinning up through the intricate channels of the Thames estuary. All hands worked with a will to get the sails clewed up and unbent from the yards, as it was now daylight. Such a morning's work had not been done on board for many a day, for was not the end of the voyage here. As for me, I was continually in hot water, for I could not keep my eyes off the wonderful scenes through which we were passing. It was my first home-coming to London by sea, and on the two previous occasions of leaving, I had either no heart to look about me or I had come down at night. Just stopping at Gravesend long enough to exchange pilots, since the sea pilot never takes a ship into dock, we sped onward again, the tug straining every nerve to save the tide. Soon everything was ready for docking, and all hands were allowed to 'stand by,' resting until we should reach Blackwall.

The East India Docks at last, with the usual little group of expectant yet nonchalant officials and the loafers in the back-ground. Are we going to dock at once, or will she tie up in the basin? As anxiously as if docking was going to take a month were these questions bandied about, so eager were all the fellows to get ashore. Joy!—she is hauled in to the side of the basin, made fast temporarily, and the mate, with a merry twinkle in his eye, says the closing benediction, 'That'll do, men.' By this time the voracious crowd of boarding-masters' runners, tailors' ditto, and unclassified scoundrels were swarming on board (it was before the beneficent regulations were passed forbidding these gentry to board an in-coming ship), and the fore-castle was a perfect pandemonium. But one by one the chaps emerged with their dunnage, and were carried off in triumph by one or other of the sharks, until, the last one having gone, we of the half-deck were left in peace. And now I *was* home what was I going to do? I felt like a stranger in a strange land, and it was with a sense of great relief that I accepted an invitation to stay by the ship for the present.

*A Change of Nationality*

MUCH as I longed for my liberty, the certain sense of a home afforded by the ship was so comforting that I was in considerable dread of the time when, as I supposed, I should be paid off and sent adrift like the rest of the crew. Therefore it was with joy that I received the welcome news from the mate that I might remain on board and work by the ship, and that my wages would be fourteen shillings a week, out of which I was to keep myself. The future which had begun to worry me greatly with its possibilities of misfortune, owing to my still insignificant size, now took a decidedly roseate hue. My arch-enemy (as I considered him), the second mate, became quite amiable, even condescending to inform me that the plenteous kicks and cuffs he had bestowed upon me had all been prompted by a sincere desire for my best interests, and that, before I was much older, I should thank him heartily for his rigorous treatment. In this latter prophecy he was grossly in error, for I have never been able to find any excuse for the brutality of a man to the helpless who chance to be in his power whether human or brute.

Pay-day came and I received my account of wages, finding that I was entitled to nine golden sovereigns. At the appointed hour I made my way up the East India Dock-road to Green's Home where I foregathered with most of my shipmates, who were dogged by villainous-looking men as closely as if they were criminals out for an airing. While waiting, they made frequent visits to the public-house at the back of the office, which fairly hummed with the accumulated rascality of the neighbourhood. But for the danger of actions for libel, I would tell some pretty little stories of what I have seen in some of the highly respectable (see evidence before the Licensing Committees) liquor-shops in 'sailor town.' But I must refrain, comforting myself with the knowledge that such tales have already been better told elsewhere. When at last my turn came, and I received that little pile of gold—more money than I had ever seen at one time before—I was almost afraid of being the possessor of so much wealth. And knowing well, as I did, the risk I ran if any one got an inkling of my riches, did not lessen my fears. I did not think of the Post Office, strange to say; but, in a few minutes, formed a resolution to lay all my money out in a stock of clothes—which, indeed, was urgently in need of—and depend upon my weekly earning from the ship to keep me. The thought of losing my employment

never seems to have dawned upon me. Full of my project, I started for Aldgate; but brought up sharply at the Baths before I had gone a hundred yards. A nice warm bath—what a luxury! In I went and enjoyed myself immensely. In about half an hour I was out again and walking briskly westward, when I stopped to make some trifling purchase—to find my money gone, purse and all. On the instant I turned and rushed back to the Baths, flew past the door-keeper, and up the corridor towards the bath I had recently left. The door stood wide open, and there was my purse on the seat, with the money intact. I grabbed it and drew a long breath, the first, it seemed to me, since I missed it. Going out, I met an angry man at the door, who was anxious to know what I thought I was up to, and so on. A shilling assuaged all his curiosity and lit up his lowering face with sudden smiles. Clutching my purse, I made all the haste I could to Messrs. Moses and Sons, arriving there with a sigh of thankfulness. I didn't feel capable of owning so much money, much less taking care of it. A gorgeously attired individual strode forward with an ironical air of courtesy as I entered, and, bowing low, wished to know my pleasure. Ah! if I was going to spend all my money, here was at least a chance to taste the sweets of that power which its possession brings. With all the hauteur I could assume, I said, as I swelled my four feet of stature in opposition to the shopwalker's majestic presence, 'I want an outfit, something plain and substantial; say about nine or ten pounds.' And as I spoke I secretly emptied my purse in my pocket, and, drawing out a few sovereigns nonchalantly, I passed them through my fingers and dropped them into another pocket. Out of the corner of my eye I watched my gentleman's face. All his sarcastic attitude vanished, and for the time he was my obsequious, humble servant. But oh! how shamelessly he made me pay for his attendance. Even after this lapse of years I blush to think how I was taken in—the shoddy rags which I received for my gold, and the swelling pride with which I ordered them to be sent down to my ship. When I left the huge shop I felt quite an important personage, although I had but five shillings left out of my year's wages. Still, such as they were, I had a complete stock of clothing, including a chest and bedding, oilskins and sea-boots; in fact, such an outfit as I had never owned before. When I returned on board I informed Bill of my purchases. He applauded my resolution, but blamed me for not keeping a little money in case of an emergency—he always did himself, he said. For a fortnight, however, I found no reason to regret my precipitate action. Then, on a Saturday afternoon, came the stunning intelligence that, as there was no more work to be done, I was no longer wanted. Fortunately I had saved enough out of my weekly wage to pay for a week's board;

so I immediately made my way to my old boarding-house in the West India Dock-road, and was received with open arms. I paid my twelve shillings down manfully, telling the master that I wanted a ship as soon as possible. After finding out by cross-examination that I had been paid off with nine pounds, he was much less cordial. In fact, he grumbled a good deal; but finally promised to do his best to get me a ship at once. Fortunately (as I thought at the time), before the week was out, I got a berth on board a large American ship—the *Pharos* of Boston—which was lying in the South-West India Dock, loading general cargo for Melbourne. As she was only about half full, I begged permission to come and work on board for my food, so that I should not get into debt at the boarding-house. The mate, who engaged me, readily granted my request; in fact, he seemed to take no interest in the matter. So I took up my quarters on board, becoming great friends immediately with the amiable old mulatto steward, who, besides being a most valuable servant, was a deeply religious man according to his lights.

And now my lines were cast in truly pleasant places. I had heard of the good times enjoyed by boys in American ships—such floating hells for their crews as a rule—and my experiences at present fully bore out the truth of my information. But I very soon saw that all was not right on board. The mate was utterly neglectful of the cargo, spending most of his time tippling in his berth with all sorts of visitors. The second mate, a stalwart youth of twenty, busied himself constantly with the rigging, studiously avoiding any encroachment upon the mate's province of attending to the shipment of the cargo. The captain rarely appeared. He was a very old man, with an awful scowl, and, although bearing himself erect, and smart-looking, was evidently long past the efficient performance of his duties. The only other members of the crew on board were the carpenter, a Finn of about sixty years of age, and the cook, a garrulous Dane, who spent most of his time yarning at the galley door with a huge knife in one hand as if it were his sceptre. A good deal of drinking went on about that galley, and often at knock-off time the stevedores had much ado to get ashore so drunk were they. At last the mate left—how or why I do not know—and from thenceforward no pretence was made of tallying in the cargo at all. Not until three days before she was advertised to sail did we get another mate, a prim little man, who had been long master of English ships, and looked like a fish out of water on board the *Pharos*.

Shipping day came, and, leaving the second mate, steward and carpenter (who were on the original articles) on board, the rest of us went down to a shop in Ratcliff Highway to 'sign on



It was a Jew tailor's, of all places in the world, and never shall I forget my astonishment at the sight it presented. When we got there the shop was full of as motley a crowd of scallawags as one could collect anywhere. Apparently they were shipping in some other American ship, from the scraps of conversation I heard. Presently one of the fellows asked a question of the sturdy-looking Israelite behind the counter. Looking up from his book, that worthy said fiercely, 'Get out!' The man hesitated, and muttered some reply. With a howl like an enraged tiger the tailor snatched up a pair of shears and sprang over the counter after him. There was a regular scuffle among the crowd for a few seconds, as the thoroughly scared candidate rushed for the door, just succeeding in making his escape as the vengeful Jew reached the pavement. In another second the tailor was back at his book as if nothing had happened. But I noticed that nobody asked any more questions, except one man, whom I took to be the captain of the ship signing on. After some little confusion the first crowd took their departure, and another assortment took their places, ready to sign in the *Pharos*. The whole proceedings were an utter farce, though with a semblance of legality; but what surprised me most of all was that each man received, whether he wanted it or not, two months' advance in the form of a promissory note, payable at this shop three days after the ship left Gravesend. Only three out of the whole crowd signed their names, the rest modestly made their mark, and the tailor wrote down such fantastic designations as his fancy suggested. Then one of his assistants marshalled us all together like a flock of sheep, and convoyed us to the office of the American Consul-General in the city, where, in wholesale fashion, we were made citizens of the United States of America. The ceremony was no sooner over than we were told to go, but sharply reminded of the hour of sailing. Our guide mysteriously disappeared, leaving us to find our way back to sailor-town as best we could.

To my surprise and gratification I found myself shipped as an ordinary seaman, at thirty shillings per month, three pounds of which I already held in the form of a 'promise to pay.' I immediately hastened to my boarding-house to get the said paper converted into money, but, as I didn't owe him anything, the master refused to touch it, and further favoured me with his opinion that I shouldn't find anybody who would give me more than ten shillings for it. Somewhat alarmed at this, I hurried to various places where they professed to discount seamen's advance notes, finding, to my amazement, that he had spoken the truth. Then I suddenly remembered an old acquaintance with whom I had become friendly, and who, being a tradesman, might be able to change my note. Off to him I hurried, finding him both able

and willing; so I got my three pounds in full. But I afterwards learnt that the highest amount any of the sailors had been able to get for their notes of six pounds had been two pounds ten shillings, and of this a goodly portion had to be taken out in clothes. And this I was told was because of the uncertainty attaching to the payment of these notes when they were presented. Under such conditions there was little room for wonder that cases of disappearance of the men who had obtained these advance notes are frequent. It was no unusual thing for half of a crew to be missing when a vessel sailed, when, of course, those who had given anything for the notes lost their money beyond hope of recovery.

Although it seems premature to say so, I feel bound to add that the friend who cashed my note received his money, when it was due, without question. Seven of the men who signed on with me did not turn up on sailing-day, so that we left the dock short-handed to that extent. We anchored at Gravesend, however, and a scratch lot of 'hard cases' were found to make up our complement. For three days we lay at the Red Buoy below Gravesend, while I wondered mightily at such delay, foreign altogether to my notions of the despatch of Australian packets. But finally a huge lighter painted a brilliant red came alongside, and immediately the order was issued for all fire or light of any kind to be extinguished, as we were going to ship gunpowder. As soon as the officers were satisfied that there was no danger from a stray spark to be apprehended, the transhipment began, and soon fifty tons of explosives were transferred to the square of our main hatch, in cases and kegs, from which a good deal of loose powder was leaking. The stowing completed, the hatch was securely battened down for sea, the lighter left, and the order was given to man the windlass. Hitherto I had been agreeably surprised to see how quietly the work went on, altogether a different state of affairs to what I had expected on board a Yankee ship. But the reason was not far to seek. Vicious as the captain looked, he was utterly helpless to inaugurate a reign of terror on board, for he had no truculent set of officers to back him. The mate was a quiet, elderly man, looking as unlike a seaman as possible, and certainly was not the man to develop into a bully. The second mate was too young, although as smart a man as ever stepped, to tackle the whole crew single-handed, even had he felt disposed; and, of course, the ancient carpenter counted for nothing. Half the crew exceedingly hard citizens, who looked as if all the ways of 'Western Ocean blood-boats' were familiar to them; the other half were Norwegians and Swedes, who were unable to speak English, and ready to endure any kind of brutality, at whoever's hands it might

be presented. Poor wretches! had they but known it, they were fortunate, for the worst that befell them was being treated as boys by the hard-bitten members of the crew, and made to wait on them hand and foot. On deck their lives were easy enough and the food was really good.

In order to save the skipper trouble, I suppose, we had a Channel pilot on board to take the ship as far as Portland. He, poor man, was sadly out of his element with the skipper, whom he early described, to the half-dozen passengers we carried, as an unmitigated hog. Still there was no open breach between them until we arrived off the Wight. Then when the pilot altered the course (we had been coming down in mid-channel), to close in with the land, the old man walked up to the helmsman and sternly ordered him to resume the course he had been steering, right down the centre of the Channel. Of course there was an explosion. The pilot protested in no measured terms against this behaviour, saying that, as his contract was performed, he was anxious to be put ashore. The captain, however, treated him with cool insolence, assuring him that he wasn't going one mile out of his way to land him, and the utmost he would do would be to put him on board any homeward-bounder we might pass near enough. This nearly drove the pilot frantic. We could hear him all over the ship. But, for all the impression he made upon the venerable Yankee, he might as well have saved his breath. Then there was trouble with the passengers. They had been led to believe that they would be sumptuously fed and waited upon, the charterers in London having painted in glowing colours the comforts sure to be met with in so large a ship for seven passengers. Now, however, they found that even the cooking of their food was a privilege for which they must fee the cook, the steward was forbidden to wait upon them, and they were entirely thrown upon their own resources. When they complained to the captain he calmly told them that their difficulties were no concern of his; he had quite sufficient annoyance in seeing them occupying his saloon, which he could assure them was intended for the reception of a very different class of people to them. Happily they were all fairly well used to roughing it, and so they sensibly set about making the best of their very bad bargain, and thenceforward ignored the scowling skipper altogether. The unfortunate pilot was kept on board five days, and finally put on board a homeward-bound Mediterranean steamer that we spoke half-way across the Bay. As he went over the side he hurled his opinion of the skipper back at him, his voice rising higher and higher, until he was no longer audible, to the huge delight of passengers and crew alike.

*The Passage to Melbourne*

WE were now fairly on the voyage, and it must be confessed at the outset that the work of the ship, in spite of the paucity of officers, went on with automatic regularity. No disturbance of any kind marred the general peace, all hands seeming well content to do their duty quietly, although fully aware of the weakness of the afterguard. My own position was a queer one. Although I was on the articles as an ordinary seaman, and slept in the fore-castle among the men, neither of the officers ever gave me any work to do, and I was compelled in self-defence to fall back upon my old friend the steward for something to occupy my time. I had all my food with him, and whenever I could do so without fear of being discovered by the captain, he allowed me to perform a few small offices for the unfortunate passengers. Before we had been a fortnight out, a circumstance, which I dare not hint at the nature of, compelled me to give up my quarters in the fore-castle and take refuge in the cabin, where I spread my nightly couch under the saloon table. The captain never seemed to notice my existence at all, at which I used to wonder much; but feeling that obscurity was not a bad thing for me, I kept out of his way as much as possible. I do not think it would be possible to find a more perfect representation of Bunyan's 'Pope' than he was. Whenever he looked at one of the men his scowl was shocking, almost murderous, and he was continually snarling at the mate for not using violence towards them. But the first gale we encountered revealed a new and still more unpleasant side of his character. Although the ship was new, and staunch as faithful building could make her, her equipment in all details of the very best procurable, I was astonished to see how rapidly sail was reduced, as if she had been the veriest poverty-stricken old hulk that ever was sent to sea to sink. Long before the gale attained its height she was 'fore-reaching' under a main lower-topsail and storm staysails, and he, the commander, like an unquiet spirit, was prowling incessantly about the cabin, or pacing restlessly in front of the wheel. In one hand he held a large plug of tobacco, from which his trembling fingers tore leaf after leaf and crammed them into his mouth until it would hold no more. Then he would pause for a moment at the lee rail and discharge, only to resume his feeding an instant later. He even consulted the poor old steward, asking him, in quite familiar tones, whether he thought the gale was taking off, although at other times he spoke to him rather more brutally than a costermonger

would do his donkey. But the crowning act of almost lunatic fear was to come. I was doing something in his beautiful state-room, when I heard him descending the ladder. I could not get out without passing him, so I hid myself behind a curtain, feeling sure that he would not remain there more than a minute. Peeping cautiously out, I saw him standing gazing fixedly at a large print of the Lord's Prayer that adorned one of the panels. Presently he burst out into the most terrible blasphemies: guttural cursings that sent cold chills of horror chasing one another over my scalp. Then he began to moan pitiably, as if in pain, and suddenly, to my intense relief, he hurriedly went on deck again. I fled in to the steward, shaking from head to foot, and told him what I had heard. 'Doan tak' no notice, honey,' said the kind old fellow. 'I guess he's a-gettin' mighty ole 'n scared, so's he don' know haef wat he sez. Ennyhaow, we cain't he'p his cussedness, 'n de good Lawd ain't a-gwine ter mek us pay fer him. I knows Him better'n dat. Don yew lissen t'im no mo', sonny, ef yew kin he'p it.' Little need to tell me that, I thought. There was really nothing extraordinary in the gale. Even the passengers, apart from the discomfort of their surroundings, were unmoved by it, for the splendid vessel behaved herself grandly, hardly shipping a drop of water. Gradually the wind took off; but not until every trace of bad weather was out of the sky was any attempt made to set sail again. And when at last orders were given to loose the topsails and staysails, the captain seemed half afraid of his own temerity, although two or three vessels passed us with every stitch set, their crews lining the bulwarks to stare at us in wonder as to why we were thus wasting the fine fair wind.

This cautious navigation, however, troubled nobody but the passengers; and even they were less disturbed by it than they would have been had they known anything of the ship's position. But that no one in the ship knew, with any certainty, except the old fellow himself; for he navigated the vessel, and did not allow the mate to take an observation, treating him in this matter, as in all others, with a contempt almost too great for words. Why, no one could tell; for Mr. Small was a good officer and seaman, keeping the ship in perfect order, and attending to all his duties in a most exemplary way. The only reason that could be imagined for the captain's behaviour to him was that he had none of the loud-voiced bully about him, and utterly refused to beat, kick, or swear at any member of the crew. One thing was especially noticeable: neither of the officers ever went forward of the men's quarters after dark, unless absolutely compelled to do so in the course of trimming or setting sail. This reluctance, on their part, to venture into what they had come to look upon as the men's

part of the deck, was of the greatest assistance to the crew in the pursuit of their nefarious schemes of plunder, which were carried on here to a greater extent than I ever heard of elsewhere. It has been already noticed that a good deal of drunkenness was indulged in before the vessel left the dock, owing to the previous mate's total neglect of duty, and that this was principally focussed about the galley. Now, it so happened that the stock of kindling wood fell very low, and this furnished an excellent excuse for the cook to be much in the fore-hold, seeking such stray pieces of dunnage-wood as he might burn. He was a poor cook, but a superlatively ingenious robber. For, finding that the 'tween deck held little worth his attention, he wrought unceasingly to get the lower hatches lifted—a tremendous task, from the massive weight stowed on top of them. At last he succeeded in getting into the lower hold, and laying open the vast accumulation of valuable cargo that lay beneath. Having done this he informed the 'hard-case' members of his exploit, and considerably arranged the fastenings on the fore-hatch so that they could get below where they listed. Thenceforward that fore-castle was a scene of luxury such as I believe has never been equalled in a merchant ship. Wire chandeliers, fitted with massive wax candles, lit up the usually darksome house, the burning of costly cigars filled it with aromatic liquors of every kind were drunk from tin pots, and at meal-times all sorts of canned meats, seasoned with various condiments tickled their palates. Yet, strange to say, there was no drunkenness. One man, the ringleader in this systematic robbery, possessed sufficient force of character to actually prevent any of his shipmates from 'giving the show away,' as he termed it. In consequence, this eating and drinking of luxuries went on for fully three months, and never a whisper of the goings-on reached the officers' ears. Even the passengers shared in the plunder. Their stores, besides being of bad quality, were so limited in quantity and variety that they were glad to purchase from the sailors a little of their spoil, asking no questions as to its origin. As the various cases were emptied the cook broke them up, carried the fragments into the galley and burnt them, so that no trace was left of the depredations.

The nightly excursions below were attended with awful risk. In the first place the men possessed no dark lantern, so they carried naked candles flaring in their hands as they crawled through the restricted spaces between the cargo and the deck overhead. And on first entering the lower hold, they had to make their way over hundreds of drums of naphtha. These were all sealed, it is true; but had there been one leaky can in that temperature over which a naked light passed! More than that, in their investigations the

marauders penetrated as far as the stern, passing among little heaps of loose gunpowder which had sifted through the hatches of the between-decks, and writhing over kegs of blasting-powder which were stowed right across the vessel amidships. At first they did this unthinkingly; but when they realized it they still went on as before. No doubt this statement of mine will stagger many who have found no difficulty hitherto in accepting my word that this book contains absolutely nothing but the truth, and is a record of my personal experience. Nevertheless, I solemnly declare that I have not deviated one iota from the simple facts of the case. What is strange to myself about it is that I did not, could not, then realize what frightful danger we were continually in; but ever since, when I recall the events of that voyage, the cold sweat starts out upon me and I tremble violently.

True to his traditions the old man kept north as soon as we were well round the Cape, afraid to run the easting down in the usual latitudes because of the stern vigour of the brave west winds. Consequently, we dawdled along with variable winds and dirty weather, never keeping a steady breeze for more than a day or two at the outside. But, as the longest passage must come to an end at last, when nearly four months had elapsed since leaving London, a rumour ran round the ship that we were on the meridian of Cape Leeuwin, the south-westernmost point of Australia. This put all hands in an exceedingly good humour, and incidentally had strange consequences. Not that she had ever been an uncomfortable ship, except for the mate and the passengers. There was never an angry word or a growl heard. Orders were executed with as much alacrity as if there had been half a dozen belaying-pin-wielding officers prowling about, ready to knock any skulker senseless on the instant. No doubt this was owing to some strange under-current of feeling about their nefarious proceedings on the part of the crew, as if they could, in some measure, set-off their wholesale robbery by the prompt, cheerful obedience they paid to all orders. But, as I have said, the report of our nearness to port sent a glow of unusual cheerfulness through the ship. Under its influence the prime mover in the plundering felt so benevolent that he actually went and fetched a bottle of brandy out of his chest, and, hiding it in the breast of his jumper, brought it to the old carpenter as he sat solitary in his berth at the after-end of the forward-house. Chips was profuse in his thanks, earnest in his protestations that he would be *very* careful not to take too much and so let the officers into the secret. No sooner was he left alone, however, than, pouring himself out about half a pint of the glowing 'Three Star,' he drank it off at a draught. His age fell from him like a shed garment. With a strange glitter in his eye he

seized the bottle again, and treated this new man that had entered into him to another jorum like the first. Then, on the instant, all the contumely that he had so long and patiently endured from the skipper rushed into his mind—a hateful burden of memories too heavy to be longer tamely borne. Flinging wide his door he stepped on deck and solemnly marched aft, high determination apparent in every motion of his transformed body. Halting before the cabin door, he shouted, ‘Cap’n Collier, ye mouldy-headed old son of a bitch, come out here! I’m jest goin’ ter lam de measly ole hed off’n ye!’ The rest of his harangue was unfit for publication. Sufficient to say that, in spite of his deficient acquaintance with the English language, he showed himself marvellously fluent in all the quaint profanity of which Americans are the acknowledged masters. Thrice was he forcibly removed to his berth by the two officers, redoubling his efforts to induce the captain to appear, and thrice he burst forth again and clamoured for the old man’s blood. At last, seeing that nothing else would suffice, he was put in irons, his feet were lashed together, and, thus bound, he was cast into his bunk to ‘sober up,’ while the second mate searched his berth for the *fons et origo mali*. He soon found it, and brought it aft to the captain. Then a close examination of the fore-hatch was made, revealing the fact that it was unlocked, although the cook swore that he *had* always locked it before he returned the keys to the second mate. However, it was now made secure, and the keys brought aft and given to the captain. Neither of the officers remembered, though, that a spacious ventilator through the fore-part of the house led directly down into the hold. This was accordingly left unfastened, and every night one or other of the unhappy foreigners were compelled to slide down it and pass up such stores as they could lay their hands on.

Meanwhile the weather holding fine and the wind fair, we drew rapidly nearer to the end of the passage. For my part, easy as my lot had been, I was thoroughly sick of it. I had never been aloft all the passage, nor had I been allowed to take any part in the ordinary work of the ship. Consequently I felt as if I were losing all my knowledge of my business, and I had gloomy forebodings of my sufferings in the next ship. Moreover I felt very uneasy in my mind as to the probable outcome of the goings-on in the fore-castle and galley. I had been so much amongst it that I felt sure it would be difficult for me to clear myself if it came to court, and as each day passed I felt more and more certain that there would be a wholesale arrest as soon as the vessel arrived. Therefore I was thoroughly unquiet, longing for the passage to end, yet dreading the arrival in port. But, so far as I could see, these dismal reflections troubled the crew not at all. The seasoned



hands had evidently prepared a plan of campaign, and had made ample provision for a lengthy tramp up-country, by stocking their bags with such preserved foods as they fancied. In addition each man had a fine gun, out of a case they had found, and a goodly quantity of cigars and spirits. Such utter recklessness, in the face of their probable wholesale arrest before the ship came alongside the wharf, was hard to understand; yet so they acted.

At last the long-looked-for light on Cape Otway was sighted, and before a splendid westerly breeze we sped through Bass's Straits, and northward for Port Philip Heads. Without any hindrance, except to take up a pilot, we raced onwards until we reached the anchorage off Williamstown, where, with the red flag flying at our mainmast head in token of the dangerous nature of our cargo, we brought up and furled all sail, 155 days out from London. It was the longest passage that any vessel had made for years, and great was the astonishment manifested by all who boarded us to hear of it. None of them could understand how it was that so fine a ship could possibly have taken the time, especially as another ship, belonging to the same owners, and admittedly a much slower vessel, had been in port a fortnight, having left London one month after us. Captain Collier told the reporters a terrible tale of the severity of our passage, which did great credit to his imagination, but left his veracity derelict. Four days passed at the Williamstown anchorage before we finally got rid of our powder—days of utter misery for every one concerned in the depredations, for they were in momentary expectation of the arrival of a police-boat with orders for their arrest. To this day it is a mystery to me why this did not happen. Of course the skipper could not know how far the robbery had gone, but that 'broaching of cargo' had been indulged in he must have been well aware. But he was so utterly contemptuous of all things English, that he may have felt quite indifferent as to what became of Englishmen's property. As his ship was chartered by a London firm it was doubtless their loss. At any rate, he did not trouble himself to order any examination of the hold, or make any inquiry into the suspicious circumstances that had taken place on the passage. At last, all being ready, we weighed anchor and were towed over to the Sandridge Pier. We arrived there late in the afternoon, so that by the time we were moored it was dusk. The decks were cleared up, and all hands sent to supper. About an hour afterwards every man forrard, with the exception of the young foreigners, who had hardly learned English, shouldered their bags and walked ashore. The old man was parading the poop as the row of deserters marched up the pier, but he either did not or would not see them. So they disappeared, and we saw them no more. Nor did we hear

of them again, although two days afterwards a reward of four pounds each was offered for their apprehension—a piece of folly almost inconceivable in its fatuity. Of course the cook had gone along with them, the danger of his position far outweighing the loss of twenty pounds in wages which he thus forfeited.

As far as I was concerned, things ran along as smoothly as heart could wish. But I was unsettled, nor could all the kindness of the worthy steward avail to satisfy me. Theoretically, I ought to have been exceedingly comfortable. I had literally nothing to do but avoid the skipper; I had thirty shillings a month as wages, abundance of good food, and I was on the best of terms with every soul on board but one. Yet, somehow, I longed to be out of it all, and could not bring myself to face the possibility of going to sea again in the ship. I took to frequenting the large coasting-steamers, which used to lie at the shore end of the pier, and at last made great friends with the chief cook of one of them: the *Wonga Wonga*. This worthy was a herculean negro, rejoicing in the name of Sam White, which, as a piece of charcoal would have made a white mark on him, was somewhat inappropriate. At the close of a delightful evening spent in his company on board the *Wonga Wonga*, I made bold to ask him if he could get me a passage to Sydney with him. Oh, there could be nothing easier than that, according to him; it was only necessary for him to speak the word, and he could take half a dozen friends up with him. But it was usual to make him a small present. I, of course, had no money; but I timidly offered him a gold scarf-pin, which had been given me by the passengers as a present (I afterwards learnt that it was worth fifty shillings). He was graciously pleased to accept it, and told me to bring my dunnage along at once. In a fever of excitement I returned on board the *Pharos*, and packed up all my belongings, now swollen to a goodly heap by the many articles of clothing given me by the passengers when they left. When I had completed my packing, I could scarcely drag the great pile of chest, bag, and bundle along the deck, and I dared not ask any one on board to help me. But I had plenty of resource; so I hooked on the yardarm cargo-tackle to the lot (all well lashed together), and after a struggle succeeded in hoisting it high enough to swing on to the wharf, having first seen that the watchman was comfortably dozing in the galley. Very carefully I lowered my precious cargo on to the pier, then crept ashore, and dragged it under a railway truck, while I went back to the *Wonga Wonga*, and enlisted the services of the cook's mate to come and carry it up to their ship, and place it under Mr. White's care. Then I got my final instructions. I was to return on board the *Pharos*, and remain there till the next day at dinner-time, when I must hasten on

board the steamer, where Mr. White would receive me, and in an hour I should be on my way to Sydney. Making my grateful acknowledgments, I returned on board, and upon a heap of old canvas slept dreamlessly until morning.

## 21

*I become a Colonial Coaster*

SURELY never morning contained so many hours as did this one. Never before, in all my varied experience, had I felt time to be so leaden-footed. For, do what I would, the thought that at the last moment some hindrance would arise and prevent me from following all my earthly possessions would not be put aside. My good old friend, the steward, noted my nervous condition, and at last called me into the pantry and asked me, in kindly, serious tones, what was the matter. In a few broken words I told him all, so fully did I trust him. He was silent for a couple of minutes, then he said, 'Well, Tommy, my boy, I'm sorry you'se gwine; but I couldn't wish to keep ye here. It's no place for ye. And, alldough I'm 'fraid I'm not doin' de right ting to let ye go, I cain't fine it in me heart to stop ye. I only hope you'll be a good boy an' do well, and I shall pray God to bless ye. I don't s'pose you've got any money, so here's ten dollars for ye. Don't let anybody know you've got it, or you'll be sure to get it stole; an' if de times should be bad in Sydney it'll keep ye fur a while. Good-bye, my son.' And with that he kissed me. That broke me all up. I declare that, never since I lost my dear old aunt, had I ever felt the genuine thrill of human affection as I felt it then at the touch of that good old coloured man, whose memory I shall cherish as long as I live.

At last the whistle sounded for dinner, and, almost immediately after, I heard the hoarse notes of the *Wonga Wonga's* warning that she was ready to depart. Like an eel I glided over the side, and off up the pier I ran, catching a glimpse between the trucks of the grim figure of Captain Collier as he prowled up and down the sacred limits of his poop. When I reached the steamer, she was in a great state of bustle. A host of passengers with their baggage were embarking, and it was one of the easiest of tasks to slip on board unnoticed. I rushed below to the cook's quarters, finding him in the thick of preparations for the saloon dinner. Hardly looking at me, he uttered a few hurried instructions: the purport of them being that I must creep down through a dim alleyway into the chain-locker, and there remain until he should send for me. At the same time he gave me a hunk of bread and meat. Then it dawned upon me that I was nothing but a 'stowaway' after all,

especially as he whispered a final command to me not to mention his name upon any account. It was a shock indeed, but there was no place for repentance; I had burned my bridges. So wriggling through the dark crevice he had indicated, I wormed my way along until I reached the chain-locker, where I made myself as comfortable as the rugged heaps of chain-cable would allow. Overhead I heard, as if at an immense distance, the hurry-scurry of departure, and presently, that all-pervading vibration following the deep clang of the engine-room gong that told me we were off. Satisfied, so far, that I was unlikely to return, I went to sleep, and, despite the knobby nature of my couch, slumbered serenely. How long I had thus been oblivious of my strange surroundings I don't know, but it suddenly occurred to me that some one was pulling my legs as they protruded beyond the bulkhead of the chain-locker.

'Sailor-man, by his boots, sir!' said a gruff voice, answered by another, 'All right, rouse him up!' Roused up I was accordingly, and, sliding forward, I confronted an elderly man in uniform, whom I took to be the mate, and a stalwart fellow in a guernsey—apparently a quarter-master. In answer to their inquiries, I told them that I had run away from an American ship at Sandridge, and, being anxious to get to Sydney, had stowed away. 'Why didn't you come and ask me for a passage?' said the officer. 'I didn't dare to risk a refusal,' I answered. 'Don't you know you can be punished for stowing away?' queried my interlocutor, severely. 'No, sir,' I replied, 'an' I don't care much. I'm satisfied to know that, unless you head me up in a beef-cask and throw me overboard, I shall get to Sydney anyhow.' At this impudent reply he frowned a little; but being, as I afterwards found, one of the best-tempered men in the world, he merely said, 'Well, come along on deck and we'll see if we can't find you something to do.'

Thenceforward I was regarded as one of the crew, and very pleased I was to find things turn out so comfortably. On the third day out we arrived off Sydney Heads, and went up the magnificent bay to the city amid scenes of loveliness that I do not believe can be surpassed by any harbour in the wide world. Mr. White had kept me at arm's length all the passage, apparently prepared to deny all knowledge of me should I show any signs of discovering our bargain to any one; but now, as we neared the A.S.N. Company's wharf, he called me to him and endeavoured to make me believe that my good treatment was entirely owing to his having interested himself on my behalf. I didn't believe a word he said, but I had thoroughly learned how unwise it was to make enemies needlessly, so I pretended to be grateful for his protection. He inquired what my plans were, and, finding that I had none, offered me the hospitality of his home until he should be able to

find me a berth in one of the steamers. This offer I accepted, feeling glad to have somewhere to go to as well as to avoid the necessity of breaking into my little stock of money. So we parted for the time on the best of terms, and I returned to my work until knock-off time, when it was understood that I was to accompany him ashore. While I was washing I was agreeably surprised to be called by the mate, who with great kindness presented me with a sovereign, and promised to do his best to get me a berth as lamp-trimmer. He also gave me some good advice as to the company I got into, warning me to beware of the larrikins that infested certain quarters of the town. I thanked him as earnestly as I was able, telling him that I was going to lodge for the present with one of the crew, and, bidding him good-bye, went down the gangway and through the warehouse to wait for the cook as we had arranged. He soon joined me, followed by his two mates bearing my chest, which was put upon a lorry and conveyed up town. I found his wife a kindly, slatternly white woman, and his home a weather-board house in Lower York Street, with hardly any pretensions to comfort. Still, I reasoned, it would do for the time as well as any other place I should be likely to find, and, from the stories I had heard of 'down town' Sydney, was probably a great deal safer.

I spent a week ashore wandering wherever I had a mind to, and seeing the beautiful place thoroughly; but I made no acquaintances. One thing was early impressed upon my mind, and subsequent experience only confirmed my belief, that Sydney was the most shamelessly immoral place I had ever seen. That, of course, was twenty-seven years ago, so may not be at all the case to-day. At the end of the week I was overjoyed to get a berth, without anybody's assistance, as lamp-trimmer on board a pretty little steamer, called the *Helen M'Gregor*, that ran regularly between Sydney and the town of Grafton on the Clarence River, calling at Newcastle and sundry places on the river *en route*. By closely observing the duties of the 'lamps' on board the *Wonga Wonga*, I had been fairly well prepared to take such a berth; but I thought, with a bitter smile, how little my sailorizing would avail me now. Still, the wages were two pounds ten shillings per month, the same as the A.B.'s had been paid on the outward passage, so I was well content.

My lamp-room was a mere cupboard by the side of the funnel, on deck, and just abaft the galley. To do my work I had to kneel on a hot iron plate in front of the said cupboard, exposed to whatever weather was going. But the cook had all my sympathies. In his tiny caboose he had to prepare meals for seventy or eighty people, while all his pastry-making, butchering, etc. (for we

carried live sheep and fowls with us), must needs be done on deck. Now the vessel, though exceedingly pretty to look at in harbour, was utterly unfit to cope with the tremendous seas that sweep along the eastern shores of Australia. Somewhere, in one of Henry Kingsley's books (the 'Hillyars and Burtons,' I think), he speaks of a little steamer climbing one of those gigantic seas like a baccling to a wall. That was a common experience of ours. Her motions were frightful. I have seen every soul on board sea-sick while she crawled up, up, up one mountainous wave after another, plunging down into the abysses between them as if she would really turn a complete summersault. Everybody was black and blue with being flung about, and the passengers, who had perforce to be battened down in the sweltering saloon, or second cabin, suffered misery untellable. Yet even that wretchedness had its ludicrous side. To see our fierce little hunchback cook astride of a half-skinned sheep, to which he held on with a death-like grip, his knife between his teeth and a demoniacal glare in his eye careering fore and aft in a smother of foam, surrounded by the *débris* of the preparing dinner, made even men half dead with fatigue and nausea laugh. But it was terrible work. As for me, I got no respite at all at night. For I had to keep the lamps burning and she thought nothing of hurling both the big side-lanterns out of their slides on deck, or shooting both binnacle-lights at once into the air, leaving the helmsman staring at a black disc instead of the illuminated compass-card. And often, as I painfully made my way forrard with the side-lights, after a long struggle with wetted wicks and broken glass, she would plunge her bows under a huge comber, lifting a massive flood over all, which seized me in its ruthless embrace and swept me, entangled with my burden, the whole length of the deck, till I brought up against the second-cabin door right aft, with a bang that knocked the scanty remnant of breath out of my trembling body. Down in the engine-room the grey-headed chief-engineer stood by the grunting machinery, his hand on the throttle-valve, which he incessantly manipulated to prevent the propeller racing the engines out of their seats whenever she lifted her stern out of the water and the screw revolved in thin air. For the old-fashioned low-pressure engines had no 'governor,' and consequently, no automatic means of relieving the terrific strain thrown upon them in such weather as this. And the firemen, who *had* to keep steam up, though they were hurled to and fro over the slippery plates like toys, were probably in the most evil case of all.

She must have been staunchly built, for she bore the fearful buffeting without any damage worth speaking of, except to the unfortunates who were compelled to attend to their duties under

{ such difficulties. And after the gale blew itself out, and the glorious sun mounted triumphantly in the deep blue dome above, the scene was splendid beyond description. We always kept fairly close in with the land, except when crossing a deep bight, and the views we obtained of the magnificent scenery along that wonderful coast were worth enduring a good deal of hardship to witness. We arrived off the entrance to the Clarence River just at dark, and, to my great astonishment, instead of going in, sail was set, the fires were damped down, and we stood 'off and on' until daylight. As soon as there was sufficient light to distinguish objects on shore, we stood in; all passengers were ordered below and everything was battened down. All hands perched themselves as high as they could on the bridge, upper-deck, and in the rigging, while we made straight for the bar. These precautions had filled me with wonder, for I knew nothing of bar harbours. But when, on our nearer approach, I saw the mighty stretch of turbulent breakers rolling in mountains of snowy foam across the river's mouth, I began to understand that the passage through *that* would mean considerable danger. Every ounce of steam we could raise was on her, and the skipper, a splendid specimen of a British seaman, stood on the bridge, the very picture of vigorous vigilance. We entered the first line of breakers; all around us seethed the turmoil of snowy foam, with not a mark of any kind to show the channel, except such bearings as the skipper knew of on the distant shore. Perched upon the rail, a leadsman sounded as rapidly as he could, calling out such depths of water as amazed me, knowing our draught. Along came an enormous wall of white water, overwhelming the hull and hiding it from sight. 'Lead—quick!' yelled the skipper above the thunder of the sea; and Joe screamed, 'Two, half one, quarter less two.' Ah! a long and grinding concussion as she tore up the ground, then along came another mighty comber over all. When it had passed we were over the bar and in smooth water, only the yeasty flakes of the spent breakers following us as if disappointed of their prey. A very few minutes sufficed to dry up the decks, and the passengers appeared well pleased to be in the placid waters of the river and at peace once more. What a lovely scene it was! At times we sped along close to the bank, while a great stretch of river extended on the other side of us a mile wide, but too shallow for even our light draught. On gleaming sand-patches flocks of pelicans performed their unwieldy gambols, and shoals of fish reflected the sunlight from their myriad glittering scales. Turning a sharp bend we would disturb a flock of black swans that rose with deafening clamour in such immense numbers as to darken the sky overhead like a thunder-cloud. And, about the bushes that clothed the banks, flew parrots, cockatoos, and

magpies in such hosts as I had never dreamed of. For an hour we saw no sign of inhabitants; then, suddenly, we sighted a little village with a rude jetty and about half a dozen houses. All the population, I suppose, stood on the pier to greet us, who came bearing to them in their lonely corner a bit of the great outside world. Our skipper, though noted for his seamanship, was equally notorious for his clumsiness in bringing his vessel alongside a wharf, and we came into the somewhat crazy structure with a crash that sent the shore-folk scurrying off into safety until it was seen to be still intact. We were soon fast, and all hands working like Chinamen to land the few packages of goods, for we had a long way to go yet and several other places to call at. Our discharging was soon over, the warps cast off, and, followed by (as I thought) the wistful looks of the little community of Rocky Mouth, we proceeded up the river again. Occasionally we sighted a homestead standing among a thick plantation of banana trees, each laden with its massive bunch of fruit, and broad areas of sugarcane or maize. From amongst the latter as we passed rose perfect clouds of cockatoos and parrots, screaming discordantly, and making even the dullest observer think of the heavy toll they were levying upon the toiling farmer. Again and again we stopped at villages, each bearing a family likeness to the first, but all looking thriving, and inhabited by well-fed, sturdy people. Just before sunset we arrived at Grafton, having passed but two vessels on our journey up—one a handsome brigantine, whose crew were laboriously towing her along at a snail's pace in a solitary boat, and the other a flat-bottomed, stern-wheel steamer of so light a draught that she looked capable of crossing a meadow in a heavy dew. There was a substantial jetty built out from the steep bank, to the end of which, after considerable fumbling about, we moored. The only house visible was a rather fine dwelling whose front verandah overlooked the jetty from the top of the bank. But, when work was done for the evening and I climbed up the bank, I was surprised to find quite a considerable town, with well-laid-out streets and every appearance of prosperity. There was little inducement to remain, however, and I soon hurried on board again to enjoy some grand fishing over the side.

Here we remained for a week discharging our cargo and reloading with maize, cases of preserved beef and mutton, and bags of tin ore. Just before sailing we received a good deal of farm produce, including several hundred bunches of bananas, for which there was always a good demand in Sydney. In order not to miss a tide we sailed sometime before daylight one morning, and, when about twenty miles down the river, ran into the region of a bush fire. As we had to hug the bank rather closely just there, we



had an anxious time of it, the great showers of sparks and sheets of flame reaching out towards us as if determined to claim us, too, among their victims. The sight was terribly grand; the blood-red sky overhead and the glowing river beneath making it appear as if we were between two furnaces, while the deep terrific roar of the furious fire so near drowned every other sound. All hands were kept on the alert dowsing sparks that settled on board of us, and right glad was everybody when we emerged into the cool and smoke-free air beyond. After that we had a most humdrum passage all the way to Sydney.

I made at least twenty trips afterwards, all very much alike in their freedom from incidents worth recording here—except one, which made a very vivid impression upon me of the hardships endured by settlers in that beautiful country. It had been raining steadily for several days, making our transshipment of cargo a miserable operation; and it was noticed by all of us, as we lay at Grafton jetty, how rapidly the river was running. Before dark one evening the skipper ordered the warps to be cast off, and we hauled out into the fairway, anchoring there with a good scope of cable. All night long the rain poured down harder than ever. When daylight broke, so thick was the obscurity caused by the deluge of rain, that we could hardly make out the familiar outlines of things ashore, even at that short distance. But we could both feel and see that the river was now a torrent, bringing down with it massive trees and floating islands of *débris* torn from the banks higher up. Towards noon the rain took off, and revealed to us a disastrous state of affairs ashore. The river had risen over twenty feet; so that we now floated on a level with the top of the bank, and might have steamed over the wharf at which we had lain the previous evening. It became necessary for our skipper to go ashore, although it was a most dangerous task navigating the boat through that raging, tumultuous current. But the sight of those poor folks' plight in the town made us forget all else. The turbid flood was everywhere; all the houses standing like islands in a muddy sea, and boats plying busily to and fro, carrying loads of stricken people who had seen the labour of years destroyed in a night. And all down the river the tale was the same: homes, crops, stock—everything that had been slowly and painfully accumulated by years of self-sacrifice—buried under the all-devouring flood. It was too pitiful for words. How terribly true those words of warning returned now which I had read some months before in one of the Sydney newspapers, 'Beware of the rich alluvial soil along the banks of rivers.' As far as I remember, but little notice was taken of the matter in Sydney; for there had been a great flood on the Hunter River, much nearer to them, at about the same time, and

that seemed to occupy most of the public attention. So many pathetic incidents were witnessed by us on that trip that it would be invidious to make a selection, even if it were not outside the scope of my purpose to do so; but one scene, from the intensity of its pathos, has haunted me ever since. A certain homestead on the shores of a lovely bend of the river, some twenty miles from Grafton, was one of the most familiar of our landmarks. The man and his wife were a splendid couple, full of energy and ability, and they had, by their own unaided efforts, made such a home of this out-of-the-way corner as gladdened the eyes to look upon. Whenever we went up or down there the worthy couple would be, surrounded by their vigorous group of sunburnt youngsters, shouting greetings to us as if we were all old friends. At this particular season they had a more than ordinarily fine crop of sugar-cane, for which they had already received a good offer from the manager of a new sugar-mill erected in one of the reaches above Grafton. When we passed down after the flood, there, on a heap of muddy rubbish, sat the man, his head bowed on his knees and his children crouching near in the deepest wretchedness. Blowing our whistle, as usual, we roused him; but after a momentary glance his head fell again. All was ruin and desolation, utter and complete. Even the grove of banana trees that used to embower his house had been swept away. And his wife was nowhere to be seen.

## 22

*Prosperity falls upon me*

As I grew better acquainted with the conditions of life on board the coasting steamers, I became extremely dissatisfied with my treatment on board the *Helen M'Gregor*. For while I had the usual duties of a lamp-trimmer to attend to, I was also compelled to work at all hours as one of the crew, while the heavy weights I was ordered to handle were far beyond my strength, and several times I was severely hurt. So that at a fitting opportunity I left her, taking up my abode with a shoemaker, who had a large connection among steamer-hands, and for two or three weeks led the unprofitable life of a gentleman at large. This was bad for me in many ways. The company I was thrown amongst was doubtful; I did not then know how much so, and, although I did not get involved in any of their shadier exploits, I began to drink pretty heavily, and, to put it briefly, go to the devil generally. This career was fortunately put a stop to by the emptying of my purse, which compelled me to get employment again.

My next ship was one of the finest on the coast, the last new

vessel of the Australasian Steam Navigation Company's (A.S.N.) fleet, which was called the *Wentworth*. To my juvenile ideas she was a floating palace, everything on board being on a grand scale as compared with the little *Helen M'Gregor*. The mate was a huge Scotchman named Wallace, rough as a bear, but very just and straightforward. When he engaged me, he gave me to understand that my duties consisted solely in attending to the lamps and polishing the ornamental brass-work about the deck, and that I was on no account to do anything else or take orders from anybody but himself or the captain. This, added to the fact that my wages were now to be three pounds ten shillings a month, made me feel quite an important personage—in fact, I was almost 'too big for my boots.' Everything on board was so excellent in quality, and so well managed, that I felt great pride in my ship, and I determined that, as I had only one master to please, I would do all I could to succeed. The first thing I resolved was that no ship in harbour should have such dazzling brass as mine, and, after I had polished it all, I used to go round the other ships and look at theirs. If there was one that I thought looked more brilliant than mine, I would come back and go over my polishing again until I was satisfied, and so I gradually got the reputation of being smart at brass-cleaning anyhow. I lived entirely alone in a little cubicle by my lamp-room, which was a spacious apartment, well fitted and quite sheltered from the weather, being on the main-deck. In return for trimming the cook's lamps, I received all my meals from the saloon messes, and thus I lived better than I have ever done before or since. Not that the men fared indifferently. The food supplied to them was of the best quality, and as for quantity—well, they had steaks, chops, and potatoes, with unlimited baker's bread, for breakfast; roast joints and potatoes for dinner, and for supper the same as for breakfast. The waste was shameful. The first two or three hands to arrive on the spot where they took their meals, would cut all the brown off a ten or twelve-pound joint. When the laggards came along, if the appearance of the meat was not to their liking, which was usually the case, they would just fling it over the side and go to the galley for more. The cook dared not complain, as the officers always took the crew's part. This partiality was owing to the system obtaining, whereby a contractor ashore supplied all provisions at so much per head, finding cooks and stewards himself. And any suggestion upon the part of his servants that food was being wasted was always fiercely resented by every member of the crew, who would immediately accuse them of trying to fatten their employer at the sailors' expense. The result was that as much food was wasted each passage as would have supplied another ship of the same size.

Those were the palmy days of Australian coasters. A.B.'s received £7 per month, and one shilling and sixpence per hour overtime when in harbour, while the day consisted of eight hours only. Firemen got £10, and trimmers £8 per month, with overtime in addition like the sailors. And, in justice to them, it must be said that they seemed to value their privileges, and did not behave in the senseless way that deep-water sailors usually do. They spent a lot of money on dress and theatre-going, it is true; but many of them owned house-property or land. Nor was their life a hard one. There was none of that tremendous drive and tear seen on the American coast, where high wages are paid—as if the officers are determined to get the last ounce of energy out of every man because he was well paid. No; take it all round, it was the most comfortable sea-service that ever I saw or heard of, and I never ceased to wonder at it, or imagine that it was much too good to last. From all reports that have reached me of late years, my ideas on the latter point seem to have been well founded, for I hear that neither pay nor conditions of service are in any degree comparable with what then obtained.

As for me, I led a gentleman's life. Called at daylight to take in the lamps, I was able to finish all my work before ten a.m., and from thenceforward I was my own master. So heavily did the time hang when at sea, that I took in washing from both sailors and firemen at the rate of three shillings and sixpence per dozen, and thus earned a lot of extra money. Unfortunately, I had no ideas of thrift; and so, although I must have been in receipt of at least thirty shillings weekly, I never saved a penny. My earnings used to leak away as if all my pockets were sieves. But, on the other hand, the comfortable life, abundance of good food, and freedom from ill-usage, had such an effect upon my hitherto puny body, that I began to look and feel as if I was capable of doing a good day's work, and should, therefore, not now be ashamed to ask for employment. I no longer felt like a sailor, nor did the prospect of a return to the old life ever enter my head—in fact, I am afraid I never thought of the future at all. My life was very pleasant; and there was nobody in the world who cared a row of pins what became of me—what more natural than that I should, like any other pampered animal, live contentedly in the present?

Our usual trip was between Sydney and Melbourne, and it generally occupied from eight to ten days. Anything more delightful than the ordinary run along the coast would be hard to imagine. I got to know every landmark between the two ports as intimately as one knows the route between his work and his own street door. But, although I was always interested in the Australian scenery, I felt delighted to hear one trip that we were bound to Auckland

next voyage. I had heard so much of New Zealand that I had got to regard it as a sort of fairy-land—a group of Islands of the Blest. We left Sydney on Christmas Eve for our Auckland trip, much to the disgust of everybody on board except myself; but as we carried the mails no delay could be allowed. The next day we were, of course, out of sight of land, steering straight across that stretch of the Pacific that lies between Australia and New Zealand; the sea was like a lake of glowing oil, and the sky a fleckless dome of deepest blue, with one mighty globe of molten gold hanging in its midst. Festivities began early—so early, indeed, that by dinner-time some of the fellows were getting very frivolous. There was a Gargantuan feed, of course; and, after that—well, it was surely expecting too much of human nature to suppose that steam would or could be kept up as usual. At any rate it wasn't. It went down, down, down until, by four p.m., the propeller was just feebly revolving, the vessel making no more than two knots at the outside. By dusk I verily believe that the only two sober males on board were the captain and myself. Drunkenness reigned supreme in saloon, stokehold, and forecastle. By-and-by the screw stopped altogether, and we lay almost motionless. A few of the more vigorous revellers made spasmodic efforts to 'keep it up;' but gradually the 'fun' fizzled out, and general sleep succeeded. How long it lasted I don't know, for I turned in as usual; but in the morning she was going again, though at no great speed it is true. The only redeeming feature about the whole orgie was the absence of quarrelling. General good-humour prevailed everywhere on board, and not a word was said in recrimination after the resumption of work. A day late, we sighted the Three Kings—those solitary rocks off the north point of New Zealand that stand up so sternly out of the blue waste about them. When we made them out, it was in the tremulous lovely light of dawn—beautiful beyond expression in those latitudes—and their rugged outlines stood out sharply against the tenderly tinted sky, through that lucent atmosphere, like the shadows cast by an electric beam. Then, as the sun sprang into the smiling heaven, they were gilded, and became like some fantastic ruin in black marble fringed with fiery rays and floating on a sea of many-coloured flame. A few hours' run brought us to the Gulf of Hauraki, up which we steamed amidst some of the most beautiful scenery in the world. As we glided onward to where, apparently, a huge mountain completely blocked up the apex of the gulf, a lovely island was pointed out to me on the starboard hand as the earthly paradise of Sir George Grey—Tiri-tiri. Here I was told it was his custom to receive troops of his Maori friends, and entertain them for days, mingling with them without the slightest consciousness of any difference of rank

or colour between him and them. No wonder they loved him, and will hand his memory down to their remotest descendants as the great white chief who loved them and justice.

Nearer and nearer we drew to Rangitoto, the frowning peak that loomed heavily right in our path. At last, when within a very short distance of it, we made a sharp turn, and, skirting a reef that extended some distance from its base, we presently opened up Auckland Harbour, which, if not so picturesque as its approaches might have led one to expect, had all the merits that a good harbour should have—pre-eminently, the chief one of being safe with all winds. In a few minutes we were alongside the wharf, and besieged by an eager crowd who had been anxiously awaiting us, as we were so much over our time. As was my constant habit, I began at once to inquire as to the fishing possibilities of the place, learning, to my intense delight, that the harbour literally swarmed with fish of all kinds, and that even from the wharf they could be caught in enormous quantities. That settled my spare-time occupation for me. During our three visits to the city, although our stay lasted a week each time, I only went ‘up town’ twice, and then strictly on business. My beloved sport claimed all my attention. For some reason, perhaps to avoid accidents, the authorities did not permit fishing from the wharf in working hours. So at daylight, enthusiastic fishermen like myself would gather along its lee edge, where the furious current boiled and bubbled around the piles, and eagerly try to ‘jag’ a few of the tiny mackerel that clustered in shoals wherever there was an eddy. As soon as one was caught he would be impaled on a large hook, fastened to the end of a long, stout line, and cast out into the current without any other gear attached. As the line ‘slithered’ through one’s fingers, an eager watch was kept where the bait might be expected to be. Presently, like a bar of silver, a huge fish would leap into the air, and it was pull for your life. There was no finesse, no sport, in the angler’s sense of the term, but I doubt if any angler ever enjoyed his fishing more than I did. This particular kind of fishing, however, always had to cease at six o’clock, that is, when work began. At other times I fished on the bottom from the ship, and was often at a serious loss to know what to do with the enormous numbers I caught. But even then I did not realize how vast were the shoals of fish in the harbour, until one day I took an oar in a boat conveying a pleasure party from our vessel down the bay. When near the reef which fringed Rangitoto Mountain, the numbers of kauwhai (a fish much like an overgrown mullet, and averaging four or five pounds in weight) were so great, that each dip of the oar slew them until the water around us was reddened with their blood. They were a fish of most delicate flavour, and

would have commanded a high price in any civilized fish-market. But the people of Auckland seemed quite indifferent to the piscatorial advantages they enjoyed.

So in this pleasant, easy-going fashion the months passed away, until one day we left Sydney for Melbourne in the teeth of a southerly gale. It was hopeless to expect that we should make any progress; but I was told, that because we had the mails on board, we were bound to 'show willing.' We managed to get round the South Head, and there we stuck; the engines doggedly pounding away, green seas coming over all, passengers all sea-sick, and we not gaining an inch against the fierce wind that roared up from its icy breeding place in the Antarctic regions. At last the 'governor' carried away, and all attempts to repair it were ineffectual. This, coupled with the fact that night was coming on, determined our skipper to run back and anchor in Watson's Bay, just behind the North Head, for shelter. The word was given, and she spun round as if rejoicing to be freed from the enormous strain she had been undergoing. As we drew rapidly near the mouth of the harbour the sight was one of the grandest conceivable. From the summit of the North Head—a gigantic cliff over four hundred feet high—fountains of spray shot up forty or fifty feet into the air, the incalculable pressure of those tremendous waves, rolling up against it from their thousand-league journey, having forced the reluctant sea upwards through the interstices of that massy cliff to such a stupendous height. We flew in through the entrance and immediately all was still. As we rounded to in the quiet little bay and dropped anchor, it was almost impossible to realize what a tormented waste of boiling sea we had just left, since we lay perfectly motionless, without a ripple on the waters around. As it was dusk I prepared the 'riding-lamp,' which is always suspended from the fore-rigging of a vessel at anchor; but, for some stupid reason of my own, I did not place it in its position. Then I forgot all about it. The captain was the first to discover its absence, and, blowing his whistle for the chief officer, he reproved him sternly for his inattention to this important detail. Smarting at this, the mate called me and asked why I had not put the light up. I made some idiotic excuse, telling him that it was already lighted and awaited his orders. He was almost speechless with rage; but controlled himself so far that he presently said calmly, 'Well, go and hang it up.' I did so promptly, and soon thought no more about it. There was just this shade of excuse for me—that I had never been anchored in a fairway before, since I had been a lamp-trimmer, except up the Clarence River, and there the gangway-lamp sufficed.

We resumed our voyage on the morrow, and returned to

Sydney without incident worth remembering. On the first morning after our arrival the mate called me, and, giving me the balance of my month's money, discharged me. Not a word was said, but I felt sure of the reason, and did not feel sufficiently courageous to try and appease him. Nevertheless I was very sore, for I knew that, while I had had one of the best ships on the coast, I had also done my work thoroughly well, for over and over again the mate had commended me upon it. I slunk ashore like a beaten dog, not caring what became of me, and, returning to my old lodgings at the shoemaker's, set about spending my little stock of cash in reckless fashion. It did not last long, of course, and I was soon fain to look for a ship; but, strange to say, I hadn't the heart to try for another berth as a lamp-trimmer. It suddenly occurred to me that I would like to go 'home' again. That is one of the most incomprehensible things imaginable to me. Never, during the first thirteen years of my life at sea, did I have any home in England, or one friendly face to welcome me back there. Yet, however well I was treated in foreign countries or in the Australasian colonies, I always felt a longing to get back to my own country again; and the sight of my home-land never failed to make a lump come in my throat and raise a feeling of wordless love for her in my breast. Why a homeless waif should thus love his native land, I do not profess to understand; but it is a solid fact, and one that has to be reckoned with, since I do not for a moment suppose that I am any different to the ordinary run of people.

In consequence of this strange longing to see the white cliffs of England once more, I neglected the intercolonial steamers altogether, and spent much of my time hanging about Circular Quay watching the proceedings on board the splendid clipper-ships that lay in that beautiful cove discharging their outward cargoes of merchandise, or filling their capacious holds with the wool, tin, copper, and meat of the Colonies for transhipment to the mother country. But, owing to a diffidence that has always afflicted me, I did not venture on board any of them to ask whether my services were required, although I was now a sturdy youngster, well able to do a day's work and looking like it. One day, as I was prowling round one of the outlying wharves, I got into conversation with a burly Londoner, who was second mate of an old barque lying there, apparently waiting for freight, which was not forthcoming for any such out-of-date craft as she was. This individual informed me that his ship was in want of two ordinary seamen, and that if I would go to a certain hotel (*Anglicè*, public-house) in the vicinity, I should find the skipper there, and that he would probably engage me at once if I was willing. This was by no means the kind of ship that I had purposed going home in; but



I was heartily weary of being ashore doing nothing (my money was all gone), so I turned my steps towards the skipper's haunt at once. I found it without any difficulty—indeed, the place was fairly well known to me by sight—and, entering, I inquired of a red-faced man (who, in his shirt-sleeves, with unbuttoned vest, was leaning over the bar from the inside, smoking a 'church-warden' pipe) if he could tell me where I might be likely to find Captain Bunker. He turned a liquorish eye upon me, and murmured, between the puffs of smoke, 'What might ye be wantin' of him?' 'I'll tell him when I see him,' was my ready reply; at which he removed his pipe and laughed most unmusically, much to my annoyance, as I did not feel like being made game of. At last he said, 'I'm Captain Bunker, m' lad; whadjer want of me?' For a moment I stared at him incredulously; and then, the conviction dawning on me that he was speaking the truth, I told him my errand. Immediately he assumed a magisterial air, and began to cross-examine me as to my qualifications, etc. My replies being satisfactory, he then tried to cut me down in the wages. But I held out for three pounds per month, and, strange to say, succeeded in getting his consent to give it to me; but not before he assured me that, if I couldn't fulfil what he was pleased to call the duties of an ordinary seaman, he would stop my pay altogether. As, in addition to my confidence in my own abilities, I knew that he was talking nonsense, I made no complaint about this; and he drew me a glass of ale to clinch the bargain. Then he told me I might go on board and consider myself one of the crew, and that he would 'sign me on' with the other new hands in a day or two.

## 23

*Another Queer Ship*

HAVING thus satisfactorily arranged for my future during some months; at all events, I lost no time in getting on board my new ship, finding her fairly comfortable, although the crew's quarters were under the top-gallant forec<sup>ast</sup>le—that abominable place that no men should ever be housed in. She was called the *Harrowby*, a barque of some five hundred tons, and, as nearly as I could judge, about twenty years old. She had been absent from England nearly two years, having been running backwards and forwards between the Colonies and Mauritius for some time, and was now, in the absence of any other freight offering, going in ballast to Rangoon for a cargo of rice to the United Kingdom. Of her original crew but half was left: the captain, mate, and second mate aft, two apprentices, the carpenter, and three seamen forward.

The mate was a tall, wiry, red-headed Cumberland man, stern and morose, but a good seaman, and inflexibly just. The second mate was so fat and easy-going that he looked more like an East-end Jew tailor than a sailor; but he was a very jolly fellow, knowing his business well, and thoroughly independent, so that he stood not the slightest in awe of his superior officers, but did pretty much as he liked. The two apprentices were gentlemanly lads, whose parents had paid heavy premiums for their indentures in this old tub, where they were just loblolly boys, at every one's beck and call, no one pretending to teach them anything, and kept on precisely the same level as the crew, except that they had a little pigstye of a berth to themselves beside the carpenter's in a house on deck. Poor lads! they were bitterly disillusioned, and full of projects for showing up this shameful neglect where they got home again. At this time one of them was acting as cabin-boy, and the other was playing at cook, with such casual direction as he could get from Hansen, an old Danish seaman. But, generally speaking, the hands went ashore to dinner and chalked their bills up to the skipper's account. The old carpenter was a philosopher in his way. Nobody interfered with him, and he just muddled along from day to day, finding hisself enough work to keep him from being actually idle, and coming forrard every evening for a smoke and a yarn with old Hansen, who, with a lanky Irishman and a pimply faced young cockney, formed for the present the whole of the crew forrard.

To my amazement I learned that for nearly a fortnight the vessel had been ready for sea, but the old man was so enamoured of his snug quarters behind the bar of the little pub, that he could not tear himself away. Nobody seemed to care very much. They killed time in a variety of ways, making believe to do some work, but principally occupied in 'dodging Pompey.' This state of things was broken into by my advent. Whether the act of engaging me had recalled Captain Bunker to a sense of his duty or not, I cannot tell; but in the course of a couple of days we were joined by an elderly Yankee A.B., rejoicing in the name of Oliver Peck, an ex-mounted policeman, whom we always called Joe; a tall, merry Suffolk man, who was the very incarnation of good-humour; a white-faced Scotchman, who said he had been chief cook of a huge steamship called the *Mikado*, and had just shipped with us as cook to work his passage home; another ordinary seaman, like myself a Londoner, but twice the man I was; and a delicate, artful little fellow, about my own age, who shipped as cabin-boy. Now we had a full crew, and soon the skipper made his appearance on board, marching us up to the shipping-office with him in great pomp and putting us all on the articles. Having once broken

the spell that had bound him to the pub, he kept free, remaining on board that night, and hauling off into the channel at daylight ready to sail. But while we were actually getting under way a boat came alongside, bearing a lady in deep mourning and an official, who mounted the side, and solemnly presenting the skipper with a piece of stamped paper, informed him that he had come to stop the ship until all charges due to Mrs. Blank, landlady of the St. Margaret's Hotel, for board, lodging, and refreshments supplied, had been settled. The old man made a ghastly attempt to smile, but the thing was too palpable. Besides, all his crew were witnesses of his attempt to pay the widow with the 'foretopsail sheet,' as sailors say, and, hugely as *they* enjoyed the spectacle, he looked as if he had been suddenly attacked by *cholera morbus*. There was no help for it; he had to pay up, although how he did it I don't know. At any rate he succeeded in satisfying the bailiff, who bade him an elaborate farewell and descended to the boat, where the widow was volubly holding forth, in our delighted hearing, upon the many delinquencies of our skipper. The news of the settlement of her claim only seemed to add fuel to her fire, and, as long as she was within hearing, she continued to favour us with a minute account of the many acts and deeds of meanness of which Captain Bunker had been guilty. As the shrill sounds grew fainter, I could not help thinking that it was an inauspicious commencement for our voyage; and, in accordance with an old mental trick of mine, began to run over in my mind the probable state of my feelings had I been in the skipper's place. There was quite a little spell of silence after the boat's departure, during which all hands looked first at one another and then at the rubicund face of the skipper, which bore a peculiar vacant smile, but not the slightest symptom of shame. At last the uneasy quiet was broken by the harsh voice of Mr. Messenger, our chief, shouting, 'Man the windlass!' In an instant we were all busy again, and did not cease our labours until the old barque, under all canvas, was gliding gently down the beautiful bay towards the wide Pacific.

At first my hopes were high that we should be going north about, for, in addition to a strong desire to avoid the unpleasantness inseparable from working to the westward through the Great Australian Bight, I was anxious to see something of the East Indian Archipelago. But the thought of Torres Straits, with its intricacies and baffling currents, was evidently too much for Captain Bunker's courage or confidence in his navigating ability, for we made the best of our way to the southward as soon as we were well clear of the Heads. At the picking of watches I found myself, much to my satisfaction, under the second mate, who seemed to have some little liking for me as his townsman. My

watch-mates were the Yankee, Oliver, the ex-policeman, and the Suffolker. As I could steer, and, except for being rather a light weight on a rope, was well up to my work, we felt pretty well manned on our side. But the mate's watch came worse off, as their 'ordinary' could not steer. Oh, it was weary work after my late life of ease! The deadly slowness of our progress, too, down the coast I had been used to skirt with the regularity of a railway-train, was hard to bear. And, in addition to all this, I soon found that my poor three pounds a month was rankling in the skipper's mind, and he was determined to try and reduce it if possible. I got a friendly hint or two from the second mate, who, although he liked me well enough, certainly did not intend to openly side with me against the old man. In most matters, it is true, he treated the skipper with such scant courtesy that I was amazed, but he put in no word of backing for me. A fortnight passed away, and we had all fairly shaken down into sea-life, while I, by strenuous efforts, had managed to recall all my previous experience and use it, with the added benefit of my additional strength. What troubled me most were the stun'sails. Studding-sails, as the word should be spelt, are the *bêtes noires* of seamen. Modern vessels have practically discarded them, happily for their crews; but such vessels as the *Harroby* cling to them as long as they live. They are temporary sails, which in fair weather are set at the ends of some of the yards, thereby extending the spread of canvas (when they are carried on both sides) to nearly double its normal width. They are set by means of booms, which slide along in two hoops screwed into bands on the yards. These booms vary in size, of course, with the ship, and also with the height at which they are carried; but even a top-gallant stun'sail-boom, the size of an average scaffold-pole, which has to be rigged out by one man, or even a boy, is a quite heavy enough piece of timber to have loose on your hands, or hand (since you *must* hold on), while swaying on a footrope some eighty or ninety feet above the deck. Then the sails themselves, with their complicated gear, require deft handling to get them adjusted in their lofty positions, and as the upper ones need to be taken into the tops, there is some fancy gymnastic work involved in handling them, which generally falls to the boys. But when they *are* set, if there is any wind worth mentioning, and the vessel does not steer well, the helmsman has a bad time, for their gear being necessarily slight and simple, catching them aback is apt to bring them down by the run in a raffle of ropes, torn canvas, and splintered booms. These delights on a dark, wet night cannot be explained; they must be endured to be appreciated. No doubt a ship with stun'sails set below and aloft, flying along with a steady breeze just abaft the beam, the golden sunlight glancing on her

canvas, and making her look like a mountain of snow, while the sparkling wavelets leap around her or are churned into lovely wreaths of dazzling foam by the eager sheer of her cutwater, makes a magnificent picture, and one that will be soon only seen in pictures. But when one remembers the cruel toil and deadly danger attached to these 'flying kites,' as sailors term them, one can only feel devoutly thankful that their day is done. Unfortunately, in the *Harrowby* we were continually harassed by these wretched things, which was the more aggravating as she was a dull sailer, to whom they made not a shadow of difference as far as any acceleration of her speed went. But we accepted them grumblingly, as sailors do any other crook in their never very straight lot. Nevertheless I felt pretty sure that, sooner or later, I should suffer in some severe way from them, and the fulfilment of my forebodings was not long delayed. We got a heavy breeze from the north-east off Cape Leeuwin, and the skipper, laudably anxious to get round that awkward corner and up north into finer weather, carried on all the sail the old barky could stagger under, including topmast and lower stun'sails. Now the *Harrowby* steered none too well at the best of times, for she was fitted with the old-fashioned chain and barrel steering-gear, that made a two hours' trick at the wheel a fairly stiff ordeal for a youngster like me. By dint of the hardest trying, however, I had managed so far to get along without more than an occasional growl from the skipper to the effect that I was making a devilish bad course. At last, on the night in question, I came aft at four bells, fully equipped in oilskins, for it was raining as well as blowing. As I reached to take the spokes from Oliver, he muttered, 'Yew'd better shed them oilskins, er she'll sweat yer hull soul out. She's kickin' like a broncho.' I took his advice, preferring to get wet than to be hampered by too many coverings at such a task. It was as dark as the inside of a coal-sack, so that there was nothing to steer by but the compass and the 'feel' of the wheel, which every sailor knows is not conducive to keeping a straight course, as the compass, however lively, never moves at the same moment the ship's head does, and consequently you can't meet her with the helm as quickly as when the stars or clouds are visible and indicate her slightest movement. Besides, the 'old man' was on deck, and, before I had time to get into her present peculiarities, he was at me with, 'Now, then! mind y'r weather hellum. Where th' hell er ye goin' with the ship? Meet her—meet her! D——n your eyes, meet her! Goin' to sleep—er what?' and so on. I might have done fairly well but for this brutal nagging; but now I certainly steered badly, and the thought of wiping her up into the wind and bringing all that raffle of stun'sails and gear down about the ears of the watch on deck made me as nervous as

a cat. However, I sculled her along somehow—about two points each way, I reckon—the ‘old man’ keeping up a running commentary all the time, until suddenly, along came a howling big sea, hitting her on the weather-quarter and sending a dense mass of spray right over the quarter-deck, drenching my tormentor and twisting her up into the wind till the weather-leech of the lower stunsails began to flap. Down sprang the second mate to my assistance, and hove the wheel up so that she spun off the wind again like a weather-cock. ‘Oh, we can’t have any more of this!’ yelled the old man. ‘That — fellow’s no good. ’Nother hand to the wheel!’ ‘Nother hand to the wheel!’ roared the second mate; and I declare I wasn’t sorry, though my pride was sorely hurt at the injustice of the thing. The Suffolker came aft, good-humoured as was his wont, and smiled pleasantly as he took the wheel from my clammy hands. He favoured me with a sly wink, too, as much as to say, ‘Now you’ll see some fun!’ As I went forrard along the lee alley-way, the old man followed me, saying, ‘I’ll log ye to-morrow. I’ll show ye how ter come aboard my ship on false pretences.’ This did my business, and I turned savagely round, saying, ‘I *can* steer as well as any man in the ship if I’m let alone, and you know that. You only want an excuse to stop my wages——’ Further remarks were drowned in a tremendous roar of tumbling water and cracking spars as the ship flew up into the wind, taking a mighty mass of black sea over all, and bringing the stunsails down with an uproar truly terrific. ‘All hands on deck! Tumble up, there! Shorten sail!’ screamed the skipper, fairly dancing in his excitement. Well, there *was* a mess, and no mistake! It took us three hours of hard struggle before we got her clear and shortened down, and during that time there were as many curses levelled at the old sinner as would have sunk the British Navy if their weight had been proportionate to the wishes of their utterers. For my part I was speechless with delight, for I felt if ever a poor fellow was vindicated promptly it was me. The diversion gave us all sore bones, though; and when, at last, we got below, we were almost too weary to growl. Stripping off our drenched rags we tumbled into our bunks, and slept so soundly that the two hours and a half left of our watch seemed only like five minutes. I took my usual trick at the wheel again without comment; but after breakfast, to my amazement, I was called down into the cabin. The skipper solemnly read to me an entry in the Official Logbook to the effect that on the night of —, in lat. —, long. —, it having been found that I could not steer, I was sent from the wheel, as unfit for my work, and, in consequence, my wages were reduced to one pound per month. This libel was signed by the second mate as a witness. I was then invited to sign it; but I refused, saying that

the entry was false, and appealing to the second mate to support my protest. He, standing behind the skipper, gave me a reassuring wink which cheered me mightily, and, after bandying a few more compliments with the skipper, I was told to 'Get out of my cabin.' The events of the past night were the subject of a good deal of comment forrard, and the general conclusion arrived at was that the old man was no good, and any deference or politeness towards him might usefully be dropped in future.

But something happened that day which, although in no wise the skipper's fault, made the feeling of insubordination ten times stronger than it otherwise would have been. Hitherto we had been living fairly well upon fresh meat and vegetables, although the cooking was very bad. The pasty-faced Scotchman who had shipped as cook *might* have been cook of the *Mikado* as he said; but, if so, he had certainly forgotten the most elementary portion of his duties. Having just come to an end of the fresh provisions, he informed us pompously that he was going to make us 'duff' to-day, 'An', ma wurrd,' said he, with an air, 'a'll gie ye somethin' ye *can* eat! Ye dinna ken whatn' duff's like aboard ther win'jam-mers.' As may be imagined, we were in high glee at the prospect of such a notable benefit as high-class duff would be. The last stroke was hardly off the bell at seven bells before I was at the galley with the kid, my mouth watering in anticipation of this superlative duff. But it strikes me that the subsequent proceedings were important enough for a new chapter.

## 24

*Deep-Water Amenities*

THE cook stood by the galley stove, swelling with conscious dignity, as of a man whose position is unassailable—above criticism. 'Now then, cook!' I cried, 'where's that duff?' For all answer he seized his 'tormentors'—a sort of miniature pitchfork—and began jabbing them down into the seething copper. 'Look out, cook!' I said, in terror, 'you'll bust the duff-bag, won't you?' No answer deigned he, but presently, with a mighty heave of both hands, he produced a square grey mass of something unlike anything edible that ever I had seen. This he dumped into the kid without a word, and waved his hand to bid me begone. Too much amazed to speak, I bore the ugly thing into the fo'lk'sle, setting it down in the midst of my expectant watch-mates, and silently retired to my corner in hungry anticipation of some fun presently. Joe approached the kid, knife and plate in hand, but on seeing the contents, drew back with a start and an exclamation of 'What the

— is *that*?' 'Duff, the cook calls it,' I murmured softly. 'Well, I'll be — if ever I see or smelt anything like it in all my life,' said he; 'but p'raps it eats better'n it looks, so here goes.' So saying, he attacked it with his knife, but only succeeded in removing some sodden, sloppy morsels from the outside of the lump. Upon the stuff itself he could make no impression; it was like a piece of indurated gutta-percha. Heavens! how he did swear. Then Oliver had a try; but in a minute he, too, was reciting the commination service. For the mess was hopeless. It was nothing but a mixture of flour and water, without yeast or fat, which had been roughly moulded into a square, and, without any covering, had been dropped into a cauldron of boiling, dirty sea-water. Of course it had hardened and toughened, as well as attracted to itself all the suspended grime in the water, until it had emerged the outrageous abomination before us. The men's wrath was really too great for ordinary bad language; they wanted to kill somebody. Presently Joe snatched up the kid rushed to the galley with it, but the cook had wisely retreated to the cabin. Thither the furious men followed him, shouting in strident tones for him to 'Come out of that!' they wanted to speak to him. Of course the old man showed himself first, blustering grandly about the impudence that thus invaded the holy calm of his cabin. This precipitated matters, and in about a minute there was a furious row. It culminated presently in Joe hurling the kid and its slippery contents right into the cabin, and striding forward with a savage string of oaths to the effect that not another stroke would *he* do until he got something that he could eat. Quiet reigned for a brief space, until presently Harry, the cabin boy, poked his nose round the fo'lk'sle door, saying with a grin, 'Cook's awful sorry he spiled the duff, but he's coming forrard presently with a tin o' soup and bully as soon's the old man's back's turned. Don't go fer him, pore beggar! he's nearly frightened to deth.' The wrath having been mostly diverted to the skipper, this proposition was not unfavourably entertained, and in due time the cook sneaked forrard with a hang-dog air, a huge tin of preserved soup under his apron. And so it came to pass that peace was patched up for the time, although this outbreak of hostilities made the way plain and easy for a succession of rows, until the skipper's authority was a thing of naught. To make matters worse we actually fell short of provisions. This was a most scandalous thing to happen, for we were only six weeks out from Sydney, where all sorts of ship's consumable stores were both excellent and cheap. And we were informed by one of the apprentices that he knew for a fact that the owners had ordered Captain Bunker to provision the ship fully in the colonies for this very reason. We were stinted in everything;



but by the connivance of the cabin-boy, Harry, who used to leave the pantry door unlocked, I made many a nightly raid upon its contents, such as they were. Many a time I had to crouch in its dark recesses, while the old man, prowling about on his bare feet, was peering in and inquiring querulously, 'Who's there?' I thought I heard somebody! The instant his back was turned I would bolt for the fo'lk'sle, with my cap full of sugar or the breast of my jumper full of cuddy biscuits, or whatever spoil was come-at-able. These nocturnal depredations were a source of endless delight to the second mate. His fat sides would shake with silent laughter as he watched the stealthy glidings to and fro, and heard the mutterings of the suspicious skipper, who never dared say a wry word to him. One night, at the wheel, I was telling him how savagely hungry I was, when, to my amazement, he replied, 'Well, there's a meat pie on the swingin' tray, why don't ye go an' pinch it?' 'What?' I said in a horrified whisper, 'an' have the old man come out an' catch me! Why he'd put me in irons for a month.' 'G'way,' he muttered scornfully, 'he'd never hear ye. No man thet smokes ez much ez he does is a light sleeper. You ain't got pluck enough, that's what's the matter with you. Yew'd rather go hungry than run a little risk.' The fact was, I didn't trust him any too much, for it occurred to me that it might fall in with his notions of fun to see the old man come out and muzzle me in the very act of embezzling that pie. His next move, however, completely dissipated all my fears. For he rolled off the hencoop, where he had been lolling, and disappeared below, returning in a few minutes with the information that he had lashed the old man's state-room door-handles together, so that he couldn't get out if he did wake. I immediately resigned the wheel to him, shot down into the darkness, and had that pie on deck before you could count ten. I sat on the break of the poop and ate it, while the second mate steered as well as he could for laughing at the precipitous disappearance of the pie. When I had concealed it all, I replaced the empty dish on the swinging tray, and returned to the wheel. Then the second mate cast adrift the lashings on the door, and all resumed its normal calm, preceding the hurricane at breakfast-time, when the loss was discovered. But there was no breach of confidence, and the vanished pie took its place among the unsolved mysteries of life for Captain Bunker.

As we crept closer and closer to our port, favoured by fine weather, discipline disappeared altogether as far as the skipper was concerned. Work still went on as usual out of deference to the officers, with whom the chaps felt they had no quarrel, but if the old man opened his mouth he was sure to be insulted by somebody. I have not told—indeed, I dare not tell—a tithe of the things that

were said to him; the only persons preserving any show of deference towards him being old Hansen and the boys. The officers, of course, did not openly flout him—they just ignored him, while he almost cringed to them. And then one day, a week before our arrival off the mouth of the Irrawaddy, Harry came forward and told us something that made sport for all hands for the rest of that voyage. Everybody was hungry now, fore and aft, the commons being woefully short. But at the usual time for taking the forenoon sights for longitude, the skipper being in his state-room with the door shut, Harry went to call him, supposing him to be asleep. After knocking two or three times, Harry heard a muffled voice within saying, 'Go away, I'm at my devotions.' Such a statement took Harry's breath away for a moment, but yielding to an uncontrollable impulse, he stooped and peeped through the keyhole. There sat Captain Bunker, a square tin of biscuits between his knees, a pot of jam open by his side, and his mouth bulging with the delicate food. Harry had seen enough; and in ten minutes it was all over the ship. From that time forward, 'Don't disturb me, I'm at my devotions,' was heard whenever it was possible to drag it in, until the monotonous repetition of the phrase became wearisome as a London catch-word. It annoyed the skipper almost to madness; but that only gave delight to the men, who felt that at last they had got hold of a cheap and effective way of repaying him for the hardships they were enduring through him.

We were favoured with splendid weather, although the north-east monsoon, being almost 'dead on end'—that is, blowing right from the direction in which we had to go—made our progress exasperatingly slow; and as the scanty stock of bad provisions got lower and lower the gloomiest anticipations prevailed. But we managed to reach Elephant Point before we were quite starved, and with the utmost joy received a white pilot on board, who, finding that he was likely to hunger if he had to make any lengthened stay with us, used all his skill to get us into port quickly. There were some fine screw-tugs plying on the Irrawaddy, but, of course, we could not avail ourselves of their assistance, the towage being enormously high, and our old man most anxious to curtail expenses to balance his waste in other directions. So we were treated to an exhibition of backing and filling up the river on the flood, just as the old Geordie colliers do to this day up the Thames; a feat of seamanship requiring a great deal of skill for its successful accomplishment. Of course the tide will carry a vessel up the river, but it is necessary to keep her under control, and, with the wind blowing straight down the river, the only way of doing this is to stand across the stream, say on the starboard tack, with all sails full; then, when as far as possible has been sailed, to

haul the yards aback, and go stern foremost back again. In this manner we worked up the noble stream, finding ourselves at the turn of the tide within a few miles of our destination, at a spot known as Monkey Point. Here we anchored for the night, the rushing of the swift ebb past us keeping up a continual undertone of energy, and straining our cable out taut as if we were stemming a gale. All manner of bloodthirsty insects boarded us in battalions, lured in our direction, doubtless, by the smell of fresh supplies of food, and through their united efforts we spent a most miserable night. So much were we tormented, that when daylight called us to resume our journey we were languid and worn-out, hardly able to tear the anchor from its tremendous hold upon the thick, elastic mud forming the bed of the river. We got under way at last, however, and then another couple of hours brought us up to the anchorage off the city, where a great fleet of steamers and ships lay loading rice, mostly for India, for the relief of a famine which was then raging.

We moored with an anchor ahead and another astern, as is usual in crowded anchorages, so that the vessel, as I have before explained, swings round and round as if moored to a post, taking up little more room than her own length. In many respects this was the strangest place that I had yet visited, the pointed spires of the numerous pagodas rising out of the dense leafage giving the city a truly Eastern appearance, while the lofty shining summit of the great pagoda dominated everything else. As soon as the work of furling sails and clearing up decks was done—as the skipper had hurried ashore—we were allowed the remainder of the day to rest, and, rigging up an awning over the forecabin, we proceeded to enjoy ourselves. Here the boats are propelled by the boatmen in exactly the same way as a gondola is, and the way those fellows managed their cumbrous craft in the swift current was something compelling all our admiration. The native vessels, too, that came majestically gliding down from far up country laden with rice for shipment, were the most interesting that I had yet seen. They were of large size, some of them carrying fifty tons of cargo, and roofed in by a deeply slanting covering of bamboo mats to protect the cargo. Both stern and bow rose in a graceful curve, while the stem often towered high in air—a perpendicular beam of teak most richly carved into elaborate designs of the quaintest and most eerie character. A tiny deck aft accommodated the steersman, who with great effort manipulated a gigantic oar working through a hole in the stern, also richly carved and decorated in some cases with gilding. But the men—the yellow, almond-eyed Burmese—not satisfied with the prodigious amount of labour expended on the adornment of their craft, decorated their own bodies so elaborately that it was difficult to understand

however they could have borne the tedium of the tattooing, to say nothing of the pain. No people in the world carry the practice of tattooing to such artistic lengths as the Burmese universally do. Every man we saw had a magnificent series of designs covering his trunk to the waist, executed in vermilion, and representing flowers, animals, and graceful whorls filling in any spaces too small to allow of anything else being tattooed there. From the waist to the knees they were tattooed in blue, the designs being plainer and not so artistic as above. They were a jolly, cheerful lot; but dignified, too, having none of the exuberance of the negro about them.

Just across the river, opposite to where we lay, was a great saw-mill, where a herd of a dozen elephants were gravely occupied in drawing teak-logs from rafts in the water up through the mud, and piling them in stacks well above high-water mark. They worked in couples, and seemed to need no directing what to do. Two or three natives lounged about among them; but every effort they made was apparently the result of their own initiative as far as could be seen. They worked in couples—sedately, ponderously; but the sum-total of their labour was quite in keeping with their huge bulk. One enormous beast was apparently the foreman (our fellows called him the bo'sun). He roamed about leisurely, bearing in his trunk a couple of yards of massive chain, which he flourished now and then as if it were a scourge which he would use upon his toiling charges should he see fit to encourage them to more strenuous effort. But as we stared at the strange sight with intense interest, there was a jet of steam from the mill, a deep whistle sounded, and on the instant every elephant dropped whatever he had in his trunk and, with quickened steps, made for his quarters. It was 'knock-off-time.'

Work proceeded in a very easy-going fashion, for the captain had taken up his quarters on shore and did not return for several days, being supposed by all of us to have entered upon a steady course of spree. We got the hold ready to receive the cargo, and did such other duties as were required of us, without any undue strain upon our energies, while our bumboatman kept us well supplied with all such luxuries, in the way of fruit, soft-tack, eggs, etc., as sailors delight in in Indian ports. Matters proceeded in this way until one day an order came off from the skipper that an anchor-watch must be kept. This meant that, instead of one man keeping watch all night, and being free from any other duty, every man must take one hour's watch in addition to his day's work. Now, this sort of vigil is only kept during a temporary anchorage, never as a harbour duty; and, consequently, there was an instant refusal to obey unless the day's work was shortened. The officers, having no authority to do this, refused to entertain the idea, and

the result was that no regular watch was kept at all. Two or three nights passed until, in the midst of a tremendous storm of thunder, lightning, and rain, I was roused by old Hansen with the words, 'Tom, id's your vatch, und de olt man's 'longside, kigging up de fery teufel cause dere's nopody awake.' I was lying on the fore-castle-head under the awning, nearly stifled with the heat; and, muttering a blessing upon the old man, I pulled off my sole garment and sallied forth into the black, steaming deluge in the costume of Adam before the fall. As I reached the gangway the old man just climbed on board; and at that moment a flash of lightning revealed everything as if in full noonday glare—especially my shining white skin. He was just angry drunk; and the sight of me standing there, naked and not ashamed, nearly made him split with rage. He howled like a hyena for the mate, who, startled beyond measure, came rushing out of his cabin into the flood. Turning savagely to him, the skipper, almost unintelligibly, demanded the reason of this disgraceful state of affairs—pointing to me, standing, like Lot's wife, under the incessant play of the lightning. It was an irresistibly funny tableau. Over the rail peered the black faces and glaring eyeballs of the Hindu boatmen who had brought the skipper off, their impassive faces showing no sign of the wonder they must have felt at these unprecedented proceedings. The hissing downpour of rain descended pitilessly, its noise almost drowning the infuriated voice of Captain Bunker, who, foaming with rage, be-rated the saturnine mate. Every other second we were all invisible to each other—the darkness engulfed us. Then a rending glare of white light revealed us all again, standing as if posing for our portraits. The mate tired of it first, and, turning to me, said grimly, 'Go an' get some close on. Y'ought ter be 'shamed o' yerself comin' aft like that.' I instantly retreated forrard, while the old man, still raging, followed the mate as he returned to his cabin without deigning a word of reply. I rigged myself hurriedly and came aft again, prepared to keep the rest of my watch under the poop-awning in such comfort as I could. But I had hardly lit a cigar (the rupee a hundred sort), and settled myself cosily in the skipper's long chair, when that restless man emerged from the companion and strolled towards me. I did not stir—indeed, it was too late, since I was caught. I could only brazen it out. At first I feared his rage would choke him, for he gasped as if the flow of eloquence was literally strangling him in its frantic efforts to find a vent. Suddenly he made two steps toward me, gurgling as he did so, 'Git off my poop or I'll kick ye down the steps!' I sprang lightly out of my seat and stood on the defensive, saying nothing, but backing cautiously to the ladder, which I descended with my face towards him. I heard no more of

him afterwards, for my watch was soon over, and my relief, one of the apprentices, came on watch at once. Next day there was a regular inquiry into the vexed anchor-watch question; and, after much heated discussion, it was arranged that we should resume work one hour later each morning and keep regular watch one hour each through the night. As soon as this was settled our worthy chief departed on shore again; and there, to our great relief, he remained.

## 25

*Proceedings at Rangoon*

FREED from the annoyance of the captain's presence, we were by no means an unhappy crowd. Lying in such a crowded anchorage there was plenty of sight-seeing, and the coming and going of vessels was incessant, owing to the demand for rice to feed the famishing millions on the other side of the Bay of Bengal. Besides that, we youngsters often got a run ashore when the mate or second mate wanted to go up town, which was pretty frequent, as there was no restraint upon them. To while away the time of waiting on the pier for them we used to have great fun with the boatmen, who squatted there sucking their eternal hubble-bubbles and chattering continually. Many a queer yarn, in queerer gibberish, did I hear from those good-natured fellows, only understanding about one word in ten that they said, and averaging the rest; so that I have no doubt that a comparison between my idea of a story and the story itself must have been exceedingly funny. But one day, when surrounded by a knot of Hindus, I suddenly remembered that when I was quite a child I had read, in *Chambers's Miscellany* a number of stories of Hindu mythology, all of which were as fresh in my memory as the alphabet. Accordingly I commenced to repeat the 'Avatar of the Fish' in such broken English, and occasional native words, as I thought would best convey my meaning. The effect was wonderful. Usually undemonstrative, they seemed fairly startled out of all their reserve, and over the ring of eager black faces wave after wave of conflicting expressions chased one another, while broken ejaculations burst irrepressibly from their parted lips. As the well-known names of Rama, Vishnu, Siva, Ganesh and Co. rolled trippingly off my tongue, their delight knew no bounds; and when at last I halted for lack of breath, they were ready to give me anything they possessed. Thenceforward I was a prime favourite among them. Well for me that it was so, for very shortly afterwards an event happened that nearly brought my career to a premature close.

I had been shaking hands with them all round, and boy-like, had been showing off my strength by squeezing their slender delicate hands in mine, extorting from them all sorts of queer grimaces and expressions of wonder at my strength of wrist. Presently a Mussulman joined the group. He had just come up from the water, where he had been bathing, after having his poll shaven. Clad only in a waist-cloth, his torso was fully revealed, its splendid proportions showing a development that many a pugilist would have envied. Our proceedings did not appear to please him, for he wore a most diabolical scowl, which, as he was anything but handsome, gave me a serious disrelish for his company. But suddenly, as if by an uncontrollable impulse, he thrust out his hand to me, making signs for me to try my strength on him. I would have refused, but pride forbade; so I placed my hand in his and waited for his grip, determined to show no sign even if the blood should spurt from my finger-tips. We stood facing one another thus for almost a minute, when, without warning, he lifted my arm high, and at the same time thrust me backwards towards the edge of the wharf, which was thirty feet above the mud (the tide being out) and totally unprotected. Another second and I should have been over, when the whole crowd of boatmen rushed at him, and, dragging him off me, forced him to retreat up the wharf shorewards. Mad with rage I seized a log of wood and rushed after him; but the remainder of my friends surrounded me, and implored me not to pursue him, as I should certainly be killed. And, indeed, as soon as I cooled down somewhat, the justice of their contention was evident, for in those tortuous alleys one might be attacked from a dozen differing directions at once, and never see the aggressor. Therefore I felt glad that I had not been allowed to have the way my mad folly would have led me, and thankfully meditated upon my undoubtedly narrow escape. The affair made a deep impression upon me, for it was the only time in all my experience that I was ever attacked abroad.

The loading of our vessel proceeded very slowly, which was not to be wondered at, since all the energies of the shipping people seemed to be absorbed by the demands of the big steamships that were incessantly carrying rice to Calcutta because of the famine. But, slow as it was, it gradually approached completion, and the important question began to occupy all our minds: Were we going to get any liberty or money? Since the night of the skipper's surprise-visit, we had only seen him once, and that was when he returned on shore the next morning. The officers were warily approached upon the subject, but they knew no more than we did of the skipper's movements or intentions. At last, after a prolonged council of war, it was decided to send him a letter, signed by one

of the A.B.'s on behalf of the rest. But then the difficulty arose: who was to write the important document? Not one of the men was capable of doing so—in fact, I was the letter-writer in ordinary for all hands. So I was approached as to my willingness to do what was required. I readily consented, only stipulating that I should be held blameless in the event of trouble ensuing. 'Oh, of course,' said they all, 'we wouldn't let you take the blame.' Well, I wrote the letter, and, although I was no hand at composition. I remember that it was exceedingly terse and to the point. With a good deal of pride I read it to the assembled conclave, and all agreed that it was a model of what such a letter ought to be. But when it came to signing the document, I was disgusted to find that each man was anxious that some other fellow should have the honour. All professed readiness to take the responsibility, but when it came to putting their names to paper they hung back. At last, to my secret amusement, the old Dutchman, Hansen, said, 'Oh, all righd, put my name to id; I tondt care for te oldt man nodd a liddle pidt.' It struck me at once that the old fellow had no idea of the vigour of the language used, but that was none of my affair. So 'Hans Hansen' was appended to the letter; it was enclosed in an envelope, and sent per the 'dubash' to the 'British Burmah Bar,' where the old man was living. In a perfect fever of excitement I awaited the result. It was not long delayed. Shortly after dinner the skipper came on board in a perfect fury, and, before he had got his foot over the rail, yelled for Hansen. The poor old Dutchman paddled aft, shaking like a feather-vane in a gale of wind, and, when he got to where the old man was standing, he looked as if his legs would double up under him. Good heavens! how the skipper did rave. Seeing who he had to deal with he just spread himself, so to speak, and, much to his satisfaction, succeeded in scaring Hansen nearly to death. Suddenly my name was called, and, in a moment, I recognized that I had been given away. Well, I had to face the music; so I determined to put the best face I could upon the matter, and, in any case, to show no cowardice. I strolled quietly aft, and received the old sinner's broadside with a perfectly unmoved front. He threatened me with prison—almost hanging—for the unparalleled crime I had committed; but I smiled sweetly, and, as soon as I could get in a word, I told him he couldn't do anything to me at all. Then he changed his tactics, and tried to wheedle me into saying that the men had compelled me to write, and begged me to tell him whose composition it was. Having by this time grown bolder, I told him that I was the author, and that I felt proud of it. This so enraged him that he ran at me foaming and screaming to me to get out of his cabin. But, even then, his prudence did not desert him, for he never



ventured to strike me, and both the officers remained strictly neutral. And, after all, the desired end was attained for every one except myself, for the next day liberty was announced, with cash to the extent of twenty rupees each. But from this I was to be excluded. However, after the other fellows had gone, my fellow ordinary seaman and I were told by the mate that we might go too, if we chose, but that he had no money to give us. We had a couple of rupees between us, enough to get ourselves something to eat, so we gladly availed ourselves of his permission and were soon ashore.

From the first hour of our arrival I had looked with longing eyes upon the mighty mass of the Golden Pagoda, and never ceased hoping that I might be able to see it near at hand; and now I determined to lose no time in realizing my desires. Bill wanted to go down town, and hunt up some of our shipmates for the purpose of borrowing a little from them; but I dissuaded him, and, after a bottle of beer each, and the purchase of a fistful of cigars for the equivalent of twopence, we trudged off. There was no mistaking the way, for the road was broad and the pagoda itself was our guide; but I have ever since rejoiced that I did not know how far it was, or I certainly should never have visited it. The fierce sun glared down upon the white dusty road so that it was like walking in an oven, gharries and ckkas rolled tantalizingly by, and our throats became like leather. But we persevered, and after I am afraid to say how long, we came at last to the imposing avenue of colossal black marble monsters leading to the first plateau. Immensely broad flights of steps led up to an enormous platform, around which we roamed, bewildered by the wonderful array of uncouth monsters grouped everywhere. Then up more steps on to another plateau from whence sprang the central mass, a sort of pyramid without angles, and rising in broad steps of masonry which, flat at first, gradually sloped upward until they were lost in the glittering cone of the towering summit. Around the base of this vast structure were small temples like porticoes leading to the interior of the main building; but far as we could see, each of them was self-contained, and no entrance to the central edifice was visible. I made many inquiries whether that great pyramid was solid, or contained chambers of any sort; but the answers I got were so conflicting that I could come to no conclusion at all. The strangest feature of the whole wonderful place was the number of elaborately decorated bells of all sizes which hung about, some of them on the most flimsy erections. They emitted, when struck, tones of the most silvery sweetness, such as I have never heard from bells (except specimens from the same country) before or since. And presently we came upon one in a secluded corner that

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must be, I should think, one of the largest bells in the world, although I have never seen any mention of it in books or articles where big bells are spoken of. It was hanging under a sort of conical shed, suspended from a gallows built of huge baulks of teak, but its lip was only about eighteen inches off the ground. It was covered with inscriptions—in Burmese, I suppose—but had no other enrichment. Curious to hear its tone, I struck it with a large deer-horn, of which there were many lying about; but there was no response. Harder and harder I struck, until at last Bill hove a massive fragment of stone against it with all his force; but still not a sound could be heard—no, not so much as an iron wall would have given back. Baffled in sampling its tone, we tried to measure it roughly, and found that with outstretched arms we could reach round it in four times. This would make its circumference about twenty feet. Then, lying flat on my back, I tried to measure its thickness of metal; but my arm was not long enough—it was much thicker than I could reach in from outside. Its height I should estimate at twelve feet; but that is very rough, since we had no pole. Altogether a grandfather of bells. Gilding was going on in all directions, the workmen perched upon flimsy bamboo scaffolding in all sorts of precarious positions; and I remember trying to calculate how much gold it must take to keep so great a place brilliant. I did not then know that the gold-leaf was one of the principal offerings made by worshippers, although, when we presently entered one of the temples, and witnessed the worship, the strangeness of the proceedings ought to have enlightened me. Yellow-garbed, close-shaven Phoongyees were squatting all over the pavement of the building, apparently absorbed in reverent adoration of the row of idols ranged along the inner end of the place. Yet, at the same time, more workmen were busily engaged in gilding the idols themselves—one, especially, was plastering the face of the central figure with it, until it shone in that dim hall like a setting sun. I was speechless with wonder at what seemed such a strange mixture of irreverence and worship. While I stood silently gazing at the strange scene, a voice near me said, in most perfect high-bred English, ‘I suppose you don’t believe in this, do you?’ I turned sharply; and there at my elbow stood a Chinaman, simply dressed in white silk, with purple cap and shoes. A delightful subtle scent exhaled from his robes, and a gentle smile played about his calm, intellectual face. In fact, ‘gentleman’ was writ large upon him; but I could not grasp the idea that it was he who had spoken. As soon as my bewilderment had passed a little, I said, ‘Was it you that spoke just now?’ He nodded, and repeated his question. ‘Of course not,’ I answered; ‘neither do you, I should imagine?’ With the slightest possible shrug of his shoulders, he

said, 'Why not? I do not claim to be wiser than the myriads of my ancestors whose faith it was. What sufficed them may surely content me.' 'But,' I replied eagerly, 'you have evidently studied in some English-speaking country, and you must have read our books. Did they not alter your opinions as to the wisdom of your ancestors?' 'I have taken my B.A. degree at Cambridge,' said he, 'and I am fairly conversant with Western literature; but upon religious topics I do not profess any opinions. The subject is far too vast for me to attempt to take up, since it would necessarily mean the exclusion of all others; and I have much to do. Consequently I accept unquestioningly that form of religion in which I was born, taking the line of least resistance. But I must bid you good day, hoping you will enjoy your visit.' And before I could say another word he was gone. I felt very small and ignorant beside this exquisite Oriental, whose gracious manners and beautiful voice have haunted me ever since, and, although I am fully conscious how poor a figure I must have cut beside so gifted and highly educated a man, I have never ceased to regret that I did not have a longer enjoyment of his pleasant company. While I still stood musing over this strange encounter, a heavy hand was laid upon my shoulder, and, turning sharply round, I was confronted by our second mate, whose ill-fitting clothes, gross, animalized face, and boisterous behaviour, formed a complete contrast to the dainty gentleman who had just quitted my side. 'Hullo!' he said with a sneer, 'what you doin' ere, hay? Goin' ter turn Me'ommedun?' I made some jesting reply, looking anxiously meanwhile at his cigar, and then at the silent row of priests, in grave doubt as to how they might take his noisy behaviour in their sacred building. But they were apparently used to it, for they took not the slightest notice. 'Got 'ny money?' he queried with a grin, knowing pretty well how unlikely it was. Upon my telling him how poorly we were off, he kindly gave me two rupees and then went on his way.

As I had by this time had quite enough of sightseeing, besides being hungry and thirsty, I started to look for my chum; and, after some search, found him sitting in a shady angle of the great flight of steps, intently watching the impassive figure of one of a long row of mendicants that lined the side of the way up to the temple. He was quite happy, and very much interested in the queer offerings that he had seen made to the beggar whom he had been studying. Shreds of tobacco, a few grains of rice, and other trifles unfamiliar to us, but of the tiniest possible value, were being dropped into his basket by the native passers-by, in response to the mellow note which resounded from a triangular piece of metal which he held suspended from a stick, and occasionally tapped with a bone. 'Goin' ter give him anythin', Bill?' I asked. "Oo?

Me? Wot djer tek me for? Lazy ole swine! I bet 'ees got a dan sight more brass 'n you er me 'll ever 'ave. No bloomin' fear!' I may have been fancy, but certainly I thought I saw a gleam in that beggar's filmy eye as if Bill's contemptuous words were quite understood by him. 'Well,' I said, 'I'm goin' ter give 'im a tanner fer luck.' And, as I spoke, I fished out four annas and dropped the little piece of silver into his cup. I turned to go immediately; but he stretched forth a skinny arm, offering me a withered, blood-red flower, and murmuring some (to me) utterly unintelligible words. Now, I would not willingly hurt any one's feelings gratuitously; so I smiled cheerfully back, accepted his flower, and saying, 'Bote accha; Salaam, ole stockin', skipped off down the steps, followed grumblingly by Bill. As we went, I told him of the second mate's gift. He immediately suggested taking a gharry back. I was in no wise loth to agree, for the remembrance of our morning's trudge was anything but pleasant. But, when we arrived at the place where the vehicles were grouped, those infernal gharry-wallahs were all so independent that they wouldn't bate a pice of three rupees for the trip. As this was quite out of the question, we took the road again with heavy hearts and aching feet: Bill cursing, in choicest Bermondsey, niggers in general and gharry-wallahs in particular. For about half a mile we trudged doggedly along, when, suddenly turning a slight bend in the road, we sighted a gharry ambling along with one door open. A bright thought seized me, and, whispering to Bill my idea, we hurried noiselessly after the slowly-moving carriage. As soon as we got near enough we saw that the driver was soundly asleep upon his box, the reins dangling loosely from his fingers, and the old horse plodding along at his own sweet will. Gently we popped into the crazy old ambulance, quietly closed the door, and lounged back like two plutocrats. I don't think I ever enjoyed a ride more, for, slowly as we went, we arrived at the gharry-stand in Phayre Street all too soon to suit me. Before the gharry stopped we opened the door and, quietly as we had entered, were stepping out, when that unlucky Bill caught his foot in the step, and, catching at the door to save himself, gave the whole concern a heavy lurch. This effectually roused the driver, who jumped down off his box and demanded his fare. Bill was furious (at being caught, I suppose) and was proposing to slay and eat the fellow, whose yells speedily brought all his chums round. As I was getting nervous I offered him eight annas, at the same time trying to pacify my burly ship-mate, who was carrying on like a madman. Fortunately a white policeman came along, before whose dignified approach all the clustering natives stood respectfully back. To him I told the exact facts of the story. Without a word he took the eight annas from

me, gave it to the hackman, and uttered the single word 'Jao'. The effect was magical. The crowd melted away, and we were at liberty to resume our journey. The rest of the day passed uneventfully enough. We had a splendid dinner in one of the bazaar dining-rooms at a rupee each, washed it down with a bottle of Bass, and, after sundry cigars, strolled leisurely down the pier, and sat there enjoying the coolness of the evening, until, feeling tired of shore, we hailed the ship, and were fetched on board by the two apprentices. A quiet night's rest succeeded; but the morning brought diversions. The ex-policeman came on board quietly enough, as befitted a man accustomed to discipline; but the rest, with the exception of old Hansen, who had returned early on the previous day, were in a parlous state. Two did not return; and, later, news came that they were safely in chowkey, having covered themselves with glory by routing a whole brigade of native police who tried to arrest them, and caused grievous bodily harm to several white constables who had finally carried them off. One of them was the jolly Suffolker, who had thus falsified all my previous estimates of his amiability; the other was Mick, the long Irishman, at whose outburst nobody was surprised. It is hardly necessary, perhaps, to say that no work was done that day, except a little clearing up decks, for which of course we boys were available. But, towards evening, the repentant revellers began to realize the extent of their folly, and to appear, in some measure, ashamed of themselves. Just at sunset a police-boat arrived bringing Mick, a deplorable object, his clothes hanging from him in festoons, and his flesh caked up with dried filth and blood. He was certainly much the worse for wear, but filled with an unholy delight at the thought of the glorious time he had enjoyed. It appeared, however, that the behaviour of Charley the Suffolker had been so outrageous, and his refusal to return to his ship so decided, that the authorities—lenient, as they undoubtedly were, to sailors—were compelled to give him a month's hard labour. Upon hearing his sentence he lifted up his voice and shouted, 'Hooray!' to the great annoyance of the magistrate, who had him incontinently man-handled off to the cells.

## 26

*Homeward-Bound in Difficulties*

AND NOW—our cargo being all on board, sails bent, and hatches battened down—we began to look forward to the homeward passage. But our anticipations were in no sense pleasurable, for, although we had certainly lived well while in port, we had as yet

received no stores for sea use, and we were in grievous doubt as to the intentions of our commander in this respect. At last, when we were fully prepared to refuse to proceed unless we saw some reasonable prospect of being fed while at sea, a boat-load of stores came off, accompanied by a new recruit to take the place of Charley, who was busy mat-making in Rangoon goal. He was an old acquaintance of mine, having been cook of a barque called the *Gemsbok*, which lay at Auckland during one of my visits—a fair-haired, happy-go-lucky Englishman; but a very poor sailor, however able he might have been as a cook. He had not been half an hour on board before he had joined us in solemn condemnation of the scanty stock of provisions he had accompanied on board declaring that we should all be starved before we got home unless we made a wonderfully rapid passage. But, with the carelessness of sailors, we allowed our opportunity of protesting to slip by; and, next morning, we unmoored and dropped down to Monkey Point, ready to proceed down the river. For some unexplained reason we lay here all day doing nothing, although everything was as favourable as it could well be for our departure. Towards evening, when all hands were sitting on the top-gallan fore-castle, enjoying the cool and smoking the universal cheroo of Bermah, the devil entered into Mick, and induced him to sneak down into the fore-castle and search for something to drink. He succeeded in discovering a bottle of square gin—the cayenne and turpentine brand at twelve annas a bottle—in Hansen's chest, which, as is customary in all ship's fo'lk'sles, was left unlocked. Knocking the neck of it off immediately, he poured the contents into a hookpot, and, at one draught, swallowed about a pint of the horrible stuff. Another drink nearly finished it; and in a few minutes he returned to our midst, not drunk, but a raving lunatic. For a little while we were highly amused at his antics; but presently, yelling, 'Well, so long all!' he rushed to the rail with the evident intention of flinging himself overboard. Bill—the other ordinary seaman—and I rushed at him, dragged him back, and, after a severe struggle, got him to lie down. Then commenced such a night of labour as I have never experienced before or since. Every device that his mad cunning could suggest did he try in order to take his own life. We got not a moment's rest. Sometimes he would feign to be asleep; but, the moment we were off our guard, he would be at it again, startling us almost out of our wits, and giving us a fearful struggle before we could get him quieted again. None of the others would relieve us, or lend us a hand—nay, they cursed us for a pair of idiots that we did not let him go, with a wannion on him. How could we? Although we bitterly resented the utterly uncalled-for toil, we dared not relax our



vigilance: both of us feeling that, if we did, his blood would be upon our heads. And, to add to our miseries, a land-breeze brought off mosquitoes and sandflies in myriads, so that, in our exposed condition, we were stung almost beyond bearing. At last, just as the first streak of dawn appeared over the jungle, he dropped off to sleep in reality. Before we had time to snatch the briefest doze came the strident voice of the mate, 'Man the windlass!' Of course Mick was excused—he was ill; but we, poor wretches, who had been engaged in a life-and-death struggle with him the whole night through, were compelled to work as if we had enjoyed our lawful night's rest. And we were so weary! Hardly able to crawl about from our tremendous exertions, and continually blackguarded for our lack of smartness, it was with no kindly feelings towards Mick that we dragged ourselves fore-castlewards at breakfast-time, when, the ship being under way and pointed down the river, we had a short spell of leisure. Of course he sat up and looked for his breakfast, confound him! As I handed him his coffee, I said, 'A pretty fine dance you led Bill and me last night, Mick!' 'Fhwat the devil d'yez mane?' growled he. I told him as frankly as I could; and, as soon as I had done, he said, 'Well, I alwuz tought yez wur a pair ov —— fules, an' now oim —— well sure ov ut. Fhwy'nt yez let me go, dam yer dhirty sows t' hell?' I answered him never a word; but I swore solemnly to myself that, come what might, I would never again move one inch to protect a drunken man from the consequences of his own act, and I have devoutly kept that oath.

Our progress down the river was but little faster than the flow of the tide, for there was not sufficient breeze to keep the sails full, and we all noticed that the old man seemed to be in an unusual state of nervous agitation. A tiny pillar of smoke astern seemed to attract most of his attention: so palpably, indeed, did he watch it, that we began to whisper among ourselves that he had been paying somebody with the 'fore-topsail sheet' again. And the event proved that we were right in our surmise, for before long a steam-launch overtook us, and a peremptory order was given from on board of her for us to lay the foreyard a-back. Our pilot immediately complied, the launch sheered alongside, and a red-uniformed official climbed on board. His first act was to present the skipper with a piece of paper. But that worthy had no need to read it; he knew well enough what it contained. Then a white man, very well dressed, came on board, and began slanging the miserable captain in rare style. He had been at his old games again: eating and drinking—especially drinking—at somebody else's expense during the whole of our stay in port, and then trying to get away without paying his bill. This time, however, matters looked

serious for him, for he had very little money, and his bill amounted to one hundred and fifty rupees. There was a tremendous amount of haggling done before the hotel-keeper would accept a compromise; but at last, a number of bolts of new canvas and several coils of rope were transferred to the launch, and with these, I have no doubt, the creditor was very well paid indeed. But what excuse the skipper would hatch up to satisfy his owners about those missing stores we could none of us imagine. Undoubtedly he placed himself completely in the power of every one on board by his mean and dishonest behaviour. As if we had only been waiting for his discomfiture, no sooner had the launch left us than we squared away to a spanking breeze, which took us well clear of the land before nightfall, fairly started on our long homeward passage.

And now we all pursued a definite course of action. It was unanimously agreed that the skipper had fairly put himself out of court, and that to him no respect whatever was due. The officers, on the other hand, who did their part well under these trying circumstances, were treated by every one with that deference which was their right, and consequently the work of the ship went on in seamanlike fashion. We were fortunate, too, in getting out of the Bay of Bengal before the setting in of the south-west monsoon, when the weather is unspeakably vile. Steaming weather, variable winds, and frequent deluges of rain make life at sea in the Bay then a burden almost too grievous to be borne. The ropes swell so much that they can hardly be hauled through the blocks without any weight attached to them, and the sails become like boards for stiffness. But we had a steady northerly wind, nights of perfect beauty, and days of unclouded sunshine; so that but for the harassing want of good food, which attacked us as soon as we were clear of the land, our lot was as pleasant as any sailor can ever expect. Very little work of any kind was done beyond the necessary handling of the sails, for no doubt the officers felt that it would be unwise to attempt too much under the strained condition of things.

And now in the long night-watches, when over a quiet sea, flooded with moonlight, the sturdy old vessel glided silent as a disembodied spirit, not a flap of a sail or creak of a rope breaking the solemn stillness, I spent many, many hours alone communing with my own soul. The old boy-life was fast slipping away from me, and the ugly sordidness of much that I had endured for the past seven years was already beginning to be mellowed by the softening haze of time. I felt deep, hungry longings for better things—often flushing hotly in the darkness as I remembered how I had wasted my opportunities in Australia, and again thinking wearily how utterly friendless and alone I was in the world. I felt that if I only had some one to work for, some one to whom my

well-being was a matter in which they took a lively interest, that I was capable even now—in spite of my ignorance—of doing something in the world; and I built whole cities full of castles in the air upon the most filmy foundations. And then all my hopes and dreams would die in thickest darkness of despair. What gleam of bright prospect *could* there be for me, a mere bit of driftweed upon the awful ocean of humanity, with no destination, except that which I shared with all mankind? So I would lay musing, looking upward into the infinite blue overhead where the never-ceasing glory of the stars kept me most comfortable company. These nights were a grand counterpoise to the petty discomforts and miseries of the day, when the discontent of their lot made the men of my watch so humpy and disagreeable that I could hardly keep out of hot water with them. I had no books but a Bible, for which I am now most grateful, because I read that grand old book—a literature in itself—through and through from end to end I know not how many times. And although I know I had not the smallest devotional intent, I am sure that the very fact of saturating myself from such a well of English undefiled was of the very greatest service to me. Religion, indeed, was a byword among us. We knew that the owners of the ship were considered a highly religious firm, and that Captain Bunker was believed by them to be a holy man. Illogically, we transferred some of our hatred of his hypocrisy to his employers, who were probably not in the least to blame for our sufferings. Therefore, in the many discussions which took place in the fore-castle on things in general, the conversation usually turned upon the general worthlessness and scoundrelism of religious people in general, and our captain and owners in particular. There were no arguments, for we were all of one way of thinking, and there was no one to show us any light upon the subject. As far as I was concerned my early piety had all gone, with the exception of an awful fear of death, in what I felt was my unprepared(!) condition, and an utter inability to accustom my tongue to the continual blasphemy of sailor-talk. In other directions my language was as foul as anybody's, so that I had nothing to brag about if I had thought of doing so. As we drew down towards the African land, the question of food became very serious again. The flour which had been bought in Rangoon was already almost uneatable—full of vermin of various kinds, and of a dirty grey colour. Our cargo was not available, being unhusked rice, or 'paddy,' and the meat was the worst I had ever seen, with the exception of that in my first ship. A portion of it boiled, and left for a few hours, became white and hard as a piece of marble, with the exuding salt. There was an increasing monotone of grumbling, which nothing but the lovely weather and easy times prevented from

breaking into open revolt. At last we made the land somewhere about East London, and it began to be whispered about among us that the old man meant going into Algoa Bay for supplies. What foundation there was for the rumour I don't know, but it had a marked effect upon every one's spirits, so that she was quite a different ship. Port Elizabeth had been the *Harrowby's* first port at the beginning of her long voyage, and probably that had some weight in making the skipper determine to call there again. Some of his old cronies would doubtless welcome him, for he had not then begun to practise leaving without settling his accounts. Whatever the cause, the confirmation of the rumour that we were going to put in re-invigorated us, and we all showed the utmost willingness at every task.

The weather now began to play tricks upon us: baffling winds, fogs, and cold, raw rain replacing the idyllic climate we had so long been enjoying. And, as we gradually crept south, more than one gale gave us a severe drubbing—sometimes blowing us so far off the land that we began to fear he would give up the idea of going in, after all. But when one morning the order came to get the anchor over the bows, and bend on the cables, all doubts and fears were silenced, and a general air of expectancy took their place. The next night the wind veered to the eastward, and blew hard, but under a heavy press of sail we stood in for the land, heading, as we believed, straight for our port. All through the night a keen look-out was kept, but nothing was seen. When the grey, cheerless dawn broke we were still plunging shoreward through the ugly cross-sea, making wretched weather of it, not a dry corner to be found forrard or aft. A dense mist prevented us from seeing many ships' lengths ahead, but that gave none of us forrard any uneasiness, as we believed that with all his faults the old man was a fairly good navigator. Two of us were on the look-out, peering through the grey veil, when suddenly on the starboard bow, not more than a mile away, appeared the tall spectre of a lighthouse, the red and white bands upon it just visible. A chill of horror ran through us all, added to the next moment by the appalling cry of 'Breakers right ahead!' The helm was instantly put up and the yards squared, but oh! how lazily she answered her helm. Then the haze lifted, and, as she slowly paid off, we saw all along our starboard beam, and apparently not a cable's length off the mighty foaming range of breakers that seemed hungry for us flinging their tops high into the air and bellowing like a thousand savage bulls. Just as if there was some almost irresistible attractior drawing us broadside on to that tumult of death, we crawled along, burying the lee-rail under water with the tremendous press of sail we were carrying, and expecting each moment to hear a

crack overhead, and see some of our spars go, sealing our death-warrant. But our end was not yet. Presently the most despondent among us could see that we were gaining ground, and gradually we clawed off that frightful reef out to the friendly sea again. A good offing having been made, we stood to the westward once more, for the lighthouse we had seen was Cape Recife, and our objective was but a short distance to the northward of it. We had just struck the wrong side of it, that was all. Still, with all our efforts, it was as much as we could do to get into Algoa Bay before dark, and anchor well to seaward of all the other vessels, in readiness to leave again.

## 27

*Deep-Water Coasting*

LANDING that night was quite out of the question, for all the surf-boats had been secured, and even had we possessed a good boat of our own (which we did not) we could not have landed in this tumultuous bay as ever was. So the anchor-watch was set, and everybody else turned in to sleep the curious, uneasy sleep of the sailor just in port, after a long series of watches at sea four hours on and off. But the earliest surf-boat out in the morning came alongside, and took Captain Bunker ashore. His last words to the mate were to 'heave short' at noon, for he would then be off with the stores, and we should weigh immediately. That was all very well for him, but by ten o'clock a howling black south-easter was blowing, and we had a full taste of the delights of Algoa Bay. The gale blew right into the open harbour, and by noon the scene was one of the most savage grandeur. Every vessel there was plunging and straining at her moorings as if she must tear herself to pieces or uproot the steadfast anchors, while great sheets of spray often hid the labouring craft from view. Our position was dangerous in the extreme. Vessels anchored in Algoa Bay for any length of time always have a huge hawser bent to the cables, which, of course, has more elasticity than chain, and to this they ride, even in the worst weather, with comparative comfort. But we had no such device. In the first place we had no hawser fit for it, in the next we had made no preparations for such an emergency. So all that we could do was just to give her all the chain we had got on a single anchor, and stand-by to let go the other one in case of the first one carrying away. For hours we watched that tortured windlass, and listened to the horrible grind of the massive links around the iron-shod barrel thereof, wondering each moment whether the next would be the last or not. Again we were spared,

Although better-prepared vessels than ours came to grief, piling their poor remains up among the many other relics scattered about that ravenous shore. By nightfall the wind had taken off greatly, although the old *Sea* still kept her leaping and curtseying like a lunatic, and made our sleep a mere pretence. And we all felt sure that our reverend skipper was snugly ensconced in some red-curtained bar ashore, with a jorum of grog and a churchwarden aglow; and would be rather relieved than otherwise to know that his ship had come to grief, and thus prevented the catastrophe that was surely awaiting him on his return home. Along about noon, however, he hove in sight. When he came alongside the cargo he had brought with him set all our mouths watering. There was a side of fresh beef, two carcasses of mutton, and a small cartload of potatoes, cauliflowers, and onions. But of sea-stock there was hardly any. Three packages comprised the whole—one of peas, one of flour, and one of limejuice. Yet with an obtuseness that is even now a mystery to me, no one raised any objection. The things were just hoisted on board, the boat left, and, when the order was given to man the windlass, there was not a dissentient murmur. Of course remarks were bandied about as freely as usual upon the never-failing subject of the old man's delinquencies; but that was because he stood upon the house aft, his knobbly face glowing like a port sidelight, his hands upon his hips, and his whole bearing that of a man whom a skinful of whisky had put upon the best of terms with himself. Up and down went the windless-brakes cheerily, while Bill and I hauled back the chain; but presently she gave a dive, and, when she sprang upward again, there was a sudden grind of the cable, and out flew several fathoms of it, tearing the chain-hooks from our hands, and treating us to an extremely narrow escape of following them. Then there was a chorus of language from the men on the forecastle. All sorts of epithets were hurled at our unfortunate heads for our failure to hold on. But while they yet spake, she gave another curtsey, and out went some more. That was sufficient to indicate the kind of a picnic we were in for, and no time was lost in rigging a big fourfold or 'luff'-tackle, which was stretched right along the deck from a stout ringbolt near the mainmast, and the forrard end hooked on to the chain. The fall was then taken to the after-capstan, and we two ordinary seamen, aided by the skipper and the two boys, hove at it continually as the chain came slowly in. As long as there was any scope of cable out, things went on all right, but as soon as we were hove short, it looked as if some damage was bound to ensue. Sail was loosed, ready to get way upon her as soon as the anchor was off the ground, she all the time straining and jumping at her cable like some infuriated wild beast.

At last she dipped her bows right to the level of an incoming swell, which, as it passed under her forefoot, flung her high in air. There was a rending crash, a shower of sparks, and she was free. 'Anchor's gone, sir!' shouted the mate, springing off the forecastle amid a chorus of '—good job, too,' from all hands. As hard as we could pelt we got the sail on her, and in a few minutes were outside the Bay, the loose end of the parted cable hanging at the bows. So closed our expensive visit to Port Elizabeth, and before nightfall we were under all canvas, slipping down towards the Cape with the favouring current and wind at a great rate, our starboard anchor still hanging over the bows. All minor discomforts were forgotten, however, in the glorious feed provided for us by the cook. While we were revelling in the good fresh mutton and vegetables, that worthy came into the forecastle, and received our congratulations with the self-satisfied air of one who feels that he has deserved well of his fellows. Presently he informed us confidentially that he had received no orders as to the disposal of the provisions, and that it was therefore his fixed determination to serve them out to all hands, both forrard and aft, impartially, as long as they lasted. He kept his word right manfully. For a week, during which we hugged the land right round the Cape with the anchor still outboard, we lived as we had never done since we left Sydney. Our gaunt faces filled up their sombre hollows, our shrunken muscles developed, and we grew skittish as young colts. Then, without warning, our luxuries all ceased, and the same grim state of privation set in as before.

As I have so often experienced since, we took a steady southerly wind right off the pitch of the Cape, before which we hurried homewards under every rag of sail we could muster—every hour bringing us nearer home. According to all the established rules on board ship, we should now have begun that general 'redding-up' to which every homeward-bounder is subjected as soon as she gets into the south-east trades. Thanks, however, to our skipper's peculiar notions of how to deal with his owner's property, we had no new ratline stuff on board wherewith to 'rattle down'—as the process of fitting new rungs to the rope-ladders leading aloft is termed. We could not reeve new running-gear for the same reason, or fit new footropes, or repair the 'service' where chafed out aloft. We had hardly any paint, or varnish, or tar, yet the apprentices declared that when she left home she was fully provided with such stores for a three years' voyage—as the owners were large ship-chandlers and never let their own ships go to sea meanly supplied. She had been out barely two years—very little of anything had been used—so that she was quite poverty-stricken aloft, and yet there was nothing left to make her look respectable coming home.

We all had easy times, it is true; but that was not altogether a blessing, since sailorizing is generally liked by seamen, who could growl like tigers at the petty half-and-half scavenging often done on board such ships as the *Harrowby* under pretence of smartening ship. So restless and irritable did the men become that it was easy to see trouble at hand. Only a spark was needed to kindle a big explosion. This was supplied by the unhappy cook, who burnt most scandalously the only meal we could really eat with any heartiness—our pea-soup. Poor wretch!—in answer to the ferocious inquiries of the men for something to stay their gnawing stomachs with, he could only bleat feebly that he ‘hadn’t got nothing; nothing at all to give ’em.’ They knew very well that this was true; but our latest recruit, Sam, the ex-cook, swore he would have something to eat or he’d know the reason why. So, snatching up the steaming kid of soup, he rushed aft with it, and, in a voice broken with rage and excitement, demanded the skipper of the grinning boy at the cabin door. ‘Tell him I’m engaged—can’t see him now!’ shouted the skipper from within. That was enough. In bounced Sam, pale with fury, and, shoving the reeking tub of soup under the skipper’s nose as he sat at the table, hissed, ‘W’at kinder stuff djer think *thet* is fer men t’eat?’ Leaning back as far as possible from the foul mess the skipper panted, ‘Git out o’ my cabin, Jew impident scoundrel! What jer mean by darin’ ter come in ’ere like thet?’ Splash! and over went the kid of soup on top of the skipper’s head, which rose from out of that smoking yellow flood like a totally new kind of Venus. The liberal anointing ran down the old man’s beard and back, even unto the confines of his trouser-legs, while he spluttered, choked, and scooped at his eyes in utter bewilderment. As for Sam, he stood like a statue of wrath, in full enjoyment of his revenge, until the outraged skipper recovered his voice, and screamed for help. Down tumbled the mate through the after-companion, but the sight which greeted his astonished eyes fairly paralyzed him. ‘Seize him! put him in irons!’ yelled the skipper. ‘He’s scalded me! th’ infernal vagbon’s scalded me!’ But Mr. Messenger was disinclined to undertake the job single-handed—knowing, too, how likely it was that any such attempt would almost certainly bring all hands on the scene ripe for a row. Therefore, Sam, after unpacking his heart of a few hearty curses upon skipper and ship, made good his retreat forward to the fo’lk’sle, where his version of the encounter was received with delirious merriment. The delight shown at this summary assault upon the old man actually took the place of dinner, and, although no substitute for the spoiled soup was forthcoming, nothing more was said on the subject. When the cabin-boy came forrard that evening with his nightly budget of



stories about the common enemy, he convulsed us all by his graphic details of the skipper's struggles to free himself from the clinging mess congealed about him. But there was not heard one word of pity—no, not even when Harry told us that his bald head was as red as a beetroot. This affair kept all hands in quite a good-humour for some days, until one evening, Chips, who rarely left his lonely den, came mysteriously into the fo'lk'sle and said oracularly, 'Boys, we ort ter be gittin' pretty cluss ter Sant Eloner. I don't blieve th'ole man means ter sight it at all; but if he don't we shall all be starved ter death afore we cross the line. I think we ort ter go aft in a body 'n tell him 'at we ain't er-goin' ter do another hand's turn less he goes in 'n gits some grub ter carry us home.' All agreed at once, and the time for our ultimatum was fixed for the next day at noon. But I happened to be doing some trivial job on the main-royal yard next morning, and, before coming down, took, as I usually did, a long look all round the horizon. And I saw far aft on the port quarter the massive outlines of the island of St. Helena, fully thirty or forty miles away. This so excited me that I could not wait to descend in the usual leisurely fashion, but, gripping the royal backstay, came sliding to the deck like a monkey. Without losing a minute I rushed forrard and told my news. There was no longer delay. Headed by the carpenter, all hands came aft and demanded an interview with the skipper. As soon as he appeared the option was given him of either going in to St. Helena, or sailing the ship himself. He then informed us what was our exact position, and dwelt upon the length of time it would take to beat back against the strong trade blowing. Old Chips, however, was ready for him. He said at once, 'Very well, sir, why not go into Ascension?' 'Oh, they won't let us have any stores there: it's a Government dockyard, 'n they only supply men-'o-war.' 'That be damned for a yarn,' said Chips; 'w'y, I've had stores there myself only two year 'n a half ago. Anyhow, cap'n, there it is: you k'n do wot yer like, but we ain't a-goin' ter starve 'n work the ship too.' After a minute or two's cogitation, the old man replied wearily, 'Oh, very well, I'll go and draw up the happplication, an' you'll all 'ave ter sign it.' Artful old curmudgeon! Still, we didn't care as long as we got some grub; so, when he called us aft again and read out the string of fabrications he had concocted, carefully omitting all mention of our call at Algoa Bay, all hands signed it as cheerfully as if it had been their account of wages.

But the look-out that was kept from that day forth, and the careful calculations of course and distance every watch, I have never seen equalled in a ship's fo'lk'sle before or since. And when at last the rugged burnt-up heap of volcanic *débris* appeared above

the horizon right ahead, our relief was immense. Our simple preparations for anchoring were soon made, and our one serviceable boat cleared for hoisting out, for, like the majority of that class of vessels, the boats were stowed and lumbered up with all sorts of incongruous rubbish, as if they were never likely to be needed; and the long-boat—upon which, in case of disaster to the ship, all our lives would depend—was so leaky and rotten, that she would not have kept afloat five minutes in a millpond. As we opened up the tiny bay, where the Government buildings are clustered, we saw, fluttering from the flagstaff at the summit of a conical hill, most prosaically like a huge ‘ballast’-heap, a set of flags silently demanding our business. Our set of signals being incomplete, we could only reply by hoisting our ensign and standing steadily in for the anchorage. But before we came within a mile of it, a trim cutter glided alongside, and a smart officer in naval uniform sprang on board. With just a touch of asperity in his tone, he inquired our business, and, upon being deferentially informed by the skipper, immediately ordered the main-yard to be laid aback while he went below to inspect the contents of our store-room. Apparently his scrutiny was satisfactory, for, returning on deck, he ordered the main-yard to be filled again, and conned the ship up to the anchorage. He then re-entered his boat and sped away shoreward, while we, as soon as ever the ship had swung to her anchor, just clewed up the sails, and then made all haste to get the boat into the water. As soon as this was done, four hands and the skipper got into her and pulled for the shore; the old man’s last words being, ‘I ’spect I shall be back in an hour.’

To while away the time, pending their return, I started fishing; but I never want to get among such fish as they were again. Lovely in their hues beyond belief, but with nothing else to recommend them, they tried my patience sorely. I have since learned that they were a sub-variety of *Chaetodon*, having teeth almost like a human being, but so keen and powerful that they were able to sever copper-wire. After losing most of my hooks, I at last ‘snooded’ with a few strands of silk not twisted together. By this means I succeeded in getting half a dozen of the gorgeous creatures on deck. But their amazing colours, fearful spikiness, and leathery skin effectually frightened us from eating them, as most of us were painfully aware of the penalty for eating strange fish. The swelled and burning head, lancinating pains, and general debility afterwards, consequent upon fish-poisoning, make sailors very careful to taste none but known kinds of deep-sea fish, and any queer shape or colour among reef-fish is sufficient to bar their use as food.

At the expiration of two hours and a half our boat returned, laden to the gunwale with bags and cases, showing plainly that



aquarium. She certainly presented a splendid field for the study of marine natural history. None of us went on board but the skipper; but some of the watch below leaned over the rail as we swung alongside and told us a pitiful story. Through somebody's negligence the lid of their only water-tank had been left off, with the result that some rats had got in and been drowned. This had tainted all the water so vilely that no one save a sailor burning with thirst could drink it, and nothing would disguise that rotting flavour. The captain had his young wife on board, and she had been made so ill that she was delirious, her one cry being for 'a drink of water.' And no one seemed to have had sufficient gumption to rig up a small condenser! It hardly seemed credible, had it not been that similar cases were well known to most of us. We had plenty of good water, and our skipper sent us back on board with orders to the mate to fill a two-hundred-gallon cask, bung it up tight, and lower it overboard. We were then to tow it back to the *Stanley Sleath*. As a cask or tank of fresh water floats easily in the sea, this was not a difficult task, nor were we long in executing it. It was the best deal made by our old man for many a long day, for he got in exchange a fat sow, weighing about fifteen stone, two gallons of rum, and a case of sugar. Followed by the fervent thanks of her anxious commander, we rowed away from the *Stanley Sleath*, our approach to our own vessel again being heralded by the frantic squeals of our prize, who lay under the thwarts, her feet securely bound but her voice in splendid working order. That evening a breeze sprang up, and, slow as we were, we soon left our late consort hull down. Thenceforward for nearly a fortnight we saw nothing of our tectotal skipper. The rum had been given us in lime-juice bottles, packed in the original case, so that nobody knew but what a case of lime-juice had come on board. And yet, as we had an abundance of lime-juice, we wondered why the skipper had not chosen something else in payment for the water. The cabin-boy, as usual, got the first inkling of the mystery. Somehow he was a prime favourite with the old man, who, I suppose, turned to Harry in his loneliness and made something of a pet of him, getting, in return, all his little weaknesses reported verbatim to the fellows forward every evening. Going to call the captain to supper on the same evening we visited the other ship, the boy noticed an overpowering smell of rum, and, upon tapping at the state-room door, he heard a thick voice murmur, 'Mnor vry well shevenin'; shlay down bit.' That was enough for Harry. Peeping in, he saw the skipper lolling on his chest, a big black bottle wedged securely down by his side, and a glass in his hand. From that spell of drink he did not emerge until the last of the bottles was emptied.

*Which brings us to Port at Last*

FORTUNATELY for us the condition of the skipper didn't count for anything, as we made our usual progress homeward indifferent to his pranks. The north-east trades hung far to the eastward, allowing us to make an excellent course northward; but, as they were very light, our gain from their favouring cant was slight. Just upon the northern verge of the tropic we lost them altogether, and lay lolling about in windless, stagnating ease for another week, exasperating all hands at this unlooked-for extension of our already lengthy passage. But even this enforced wait had its advantages. We spoke another barque—homeward-bound from Brisbane—and again our adventurous commander would go ship-visiting. In fact, he allowed it to become known that, but for our determined attitude about calling at Ascension, he had intended to *beg* his way home—a peculiarly irritating practice much fancied by men of his stamp, who thus levy a sort of blackmail upon well-found ships. They pitch a pitiful yarn about bad weather and abnormal length of passage, with such embroidery as their imagination suggests, and generally succeed in getting quite a lot of things 'on the cheap.'

What sort of a yarn our mendacious skipper spun to this last vessel we had no means of knowing, as the boat's crew were not allowed to board her; but he succeeded in getting a couple of cases of preserved beef and some small stores. Much to his disgust, however, there was no liquor of any kind to be had. The only thing that the other ship wanted was a few coals for the galley fire; so, while our skipper stayed on board, the boat was sent back for them. Now it was Sunday afternoon, and when Bill and I were ordered to go down into the fore-peak and fill three sacks with coal, we felt much aggrieved. So, grumblingly, we dived into the black pit forrard, and began to fill the sacks. But, suddenly, a bright idea struck us. The only pretence at ship-smartening we were likely to make was 'holystoning' the decks, and, to this end, several lumps of sandstone had been saved ever since we left Sydney. Now, I have before noted in what abhorrence holystoning is held by all who have to perform it, and here was a heaven-sent opportunity, to make the job impossible. So we carefully interspersed the lumps of stone among the coal in the sacks, taking every precaution to leave not a fragment behind. Away it went to the other ship: it was hoisted on board, our boat returned, a breeze sprang up and we parted company, seeing each other no

more. Two or three days after the order was given to get up the holystones for cleaning ship. Words could not express the wrath of the mate when it was reported to him that none were to be found. Every bit of coal in the fore-peak was dug over, under his immediate supervision, he getting in a most parlous mess the while, but in vain. I never saw a man get so angry over a trifle. He swore that they had been thrown overboard by somebody, being certain that there had been an ample store. Singularly enough, he never dreamed of the real way of their going, and the actual perpetrators of the certainly immoral act were never even suspected. We had to do the best we could with ashes and brooms, but they made a poor substitute for the ponderous scouring of the stones. I regret to say that neither of us felt the slightest remorse for our deed, and, when we heard the delighted comments of the men were more puffed up, I am afraid, than we should have been by the consciousness of having acted ever so virtuously.

And now, as we were approaching the area of heavy weather, and our stun'sails were worn almost to muslin, we began to send down the stun'sail gear. The first thing that happened: the ex-cook, in sending down one of the topgallant stun'sail-booms (a spar like a smooth scaffold-pole), made his 'rolling hitch' the wrong way. Perfectly satisfied that all was in order he sung out to us on deck to 'hoist away.' The moment we did so, and the boom swung out of the irons in which it had been lying, it assumed a vertical position and slid through the hitch like lightning, just missing the rail, and plunging end-on into the sea alongside. We were going about four knots at the time, and when it sprang upwards again it struck us under the counter with a bang that almost stove in the outer skin of the ship. And, instead of being at all chagrined at such a gross piece of bungling, the offender simply exhausted his copious vocabulary of abuse when the 'old man' ventured to rebuke him. Oh, our discipline was grand! Hardly an hour afterwards, in taking in the fore-topmast stun'sail, the halliards carried away. The tack and sheet, rotten as cobwebs almost, followed suit, so we lost that too. The rest of the rags were saved for the old-rope merchant.

Still the fine weather persisted, and at last we crawled up under the lee of Terceira in the Azores, where we got becalmed within a couple of miles of Angra. That was on a Sunday afternoon—and if Captain Bunker didn't actually propose to go ashore and have a donkey-ride! He was perfectly sober, too. But this was too much for even our quiet mate's patience. He turned upon his commander at last. I was at the wheel, and heard him tell the skipper that if he carried out his proposal, and a breeze sprang up while he was ashore, he, the mate, would certainly make sail and leave him

there. He was sick to death of the state of things, and he would have no more of it. This outburst frightened the old fellow terribly, and, with a feeble remark that he was 'only joking,' he disappeared below. The calm continued all through the night, some invisible influence setting the vessel so closely inshore that I began to fear we were going to lose her after all. Yet nothing whatever was done to prepare for such a contingency. The anchor was securely lashed in its sea-position on the fore-castle, and, to all outward appearance, no notice was taken at all by the officers of our undoubtedly perilous proximity to the shore. Just before dawn, however, a little south-easterly breeze sprang up, to which we trimmed the yards, and soon glided away from all danger. Gradually the wind freshened and veered until at west-south-west it was blowing a strong steady breeze, and, with all square-sail set, the old *Harrowby* was bowling along at a good eight knots for the Channel. Faithful as usual, this well-beloved wind to the homeward-bounder never relaxed its strenuous push until the changing hue of the water, plain for all men to see, told us that we were once more on soundings. Oh, blessed sight, that never falls upon the deep-water sailor, the fading away of that deep fathomless blue which for so many, many weary watches has greeted the eye! Somehow or other, too, the green of the Channel of Old England has a different tint to any other sea-green. It is not a pretty colour, will not for a moment bear comparison with the blazing emerald of some tropical shores, but it looks welcome—it says home; and even the most homeless and hardened of shell-backs feels a deep complacency when it greets his usually unobservant eye. Contrary to my usual experience of the brave westerlies, this breeze of ours did not culminate in a gale; but as we neared the Scilly Isles it gradually took off, and the weather brightened, until one heavenly morning at daybreak we saw under a pale-blue sky, bathed in brilliant sunshine, those straggling outposts of dear old England like bits of fairyland—uncut jewels scattered over a silver sea. And here, to our intense delight, came a dandy: one of those staunch Falmouth boats with the funny little jigger perked up aft like the tail of a saucy cockerel. She made straight for us in business-like fashion, rounded to alongside, and her commander climbed nimbly on board, while the other two men in her hove on board a splendid mess of fish. The enterprising boatman was the runner for a Falmouth tailor, who had come out thus far seeking customers. He was, of course, elated, to find that we were bound into Falmouth, and that his diligence was likely to be rewarded. For few indeed are the homeward-bounders calling at Falmouth for orders, whose crews do not liberally patronize the Falmouth outfitters, getting good value for their money, and being able to

choose their goods with clear heads, apart from the bestial distractions of sailor-town. And the captains of such vessels are never loth, *of course*, to allow their men to run up a bill with the tailor, and to forward the amount from the port of discharge, wherever it may be.

Favoured still by fortune we sped on toward the lovely harbour, and at four p.m. rounded the well-known old tower of Pendennis and entered the anchorage. Sail-furling and clearing up decks was got over as if by magic, and, by the time we were at leisure here was the prompt tailor-man with his leather-covered trunks full of boots and clothes, ready to reap the first-fruits of our labours.

Here we lay in serenest peace for a couple of days, the weather being more like late spring than November, so fine and balmy as to make us wonder whether we had not mistaken the time of year. Then orders came for us to proceed to London. We towed out of the harbour on a lovely afternoon, with the Channel looking like a glimpse of fairyland under the delicate blue of the cloudless sky. Under all sail we gently jogged along the coast, standing more to seaward as night came on, and noting, with comfortable compassion, the outward-bounders just beginning the long journey of which we were so near the end. I had the ten to midnight wheel, and, in consequence of the mild weather, was lightly clad in the usual tropical rig of shirt, trousers, and cap. Before half my 'trick' was over there was a sudden change. The wind came out from the north-east, and piped up with a spiteful sting in it that pierced me through. My thin blood seemed to suck up the cold until I was benumbed and almost unable to move the wheel. But there was no chance to wrap up. All hands were as busy as bees shortening her down, for the wind rose faster than they could get the sail in, and at midnight it was blowing a gale, with squalls of sleet and driving banks of fog. One o'clock came before I was relieved, and then I had hardly enough vitality left to get forrard, my two garments being stiff upon my lead-coloured flesh. Somehow I got into the forecastle and changed my rig; then, rolling my one blanket round me, I crawled into my bunk. No sleep and no warmth could I get, nor did I feel more than half alive at eight bells. But I dragged myself on deck and suffered, till at five a.m. the cook shouted 'Coffee!' as usual, and then the pannikin of boiling brown water did comfort my frozen vitals.

We were now just fore-reaching under two lower topsails, reefed foresail, and fore-topmast staysail—not even holding our own. Every little while the big flyers outward-bound would spring out of the fog-laden gloom, and glide past us under a pyramid of canvas like vast spirits of the storm. Of a panting, labouring



tramp-steamer would plough her painful way up channel right in the wind's eye, digging her blunt snout into the angry brine, and lifting it aboard in a roaring flood that hid her for a minute entirely under a mantle of white foam. We had even some pity to spare for the poor devils in such evil case as that on those perishing iron decks, or being flung like a tennis-ball between bunker, bulkhead, and furnace-door in the Gehenna below, while the freezing floods came streaming down upon them through the grated 'fidley' above. Fifteen days did that merciless north-easter thrash and wither us, until we felt that nothing mattered—we had reached such a dumb depth of misery. Still, we did make *some* progress, for on the sixteenth day we sighted Dungeness, the first clearly distinguishable land we had seen since leaving Falmouth. The arrival of the pilot cheered us up, as it always does. He seems to bring with him the assurance of safety, to be a hand stretched out from home able and anxious to draw you thither. And, as so often happens, too, the weather fined down almost immediately. Under his wise guidance we stole stealthily along the coast until, off Dover, a big tugboat sallied out and made for us. None of us took any notice of him; we knew too well that we were not the sort of game he was after. A ship about five times our size was nearer his weight. Still, he came alongside and hailed *us* with, 'R ye takin' steam up, cap'n?' ironically, as we all felt. 'Ah!' replied the old man, 'yew're too big a swell f'r me.' 'Nev' mind 'bout that,' promptly came back. 'I'm a-goin' up, anyhow, 'n *you* won't make any diff'rance ter me. Come, wot'll yer gimme?' 'Ten poun',' sniggered the old man. 'Oh! Go on ahead!'—the interjection explosive, and the order snarled down the speaking-tube to his engineer. Before, however, the paddles had made one revolution, he stopped them, and shouted back, 'Looky 'ere, I ain't foolin'; I'll take ye up fur thutty poun'. Thet won't 'urt yer.' 'Can't do it,' drawled the skipper. 'Owners wouldn't pay it. 'Ow-ever, ef yew mean bizness, I'm 'lowed to go ter twenty, 'n not 'nother pice.' Then the fun began. They argued and chaffed and swore until, finally, the tug got so close that her skipper stepped off the paddle-box on board of us, and, as he did so, we saw a bottle sticking out of his pea-jacket pocket. They both went below, and there was silence. When they reappeared our old man's face was glowing like burnished copper, and Oliver muttered, 'I'm off'rin' big money thet bottle's empty, and the steam-boat man ain't a-hed much neither.' But they hadn't settled the bargain. No; the next game was to toss one another—best two out of three—whether the tug should take us up for twenty pounds or twenty-five. Steam won; and the old man immediately signed to the mate to get the hawser up. Great Caesar! how we did snake the hatches

off before the order came, forgetting that we hadn't got a hawser fit for the job. That made no odds; the tug-boat man wasn't going to let a little thing like that stand in his way, especially as his coal supply was so low that every minute was precious. So he lent us his tow-line, and in less than five minutes the *Robert Bruce* was pelting away homeward as if nothing was behind her at all, and we were all admiring the first bit of speed the old *Harrowby* had put on since we had belonged to her. Night fell as we passed the Nore, but there was no delay. Onward we went, until, passing everything on the way, we anchored at Gravesend. Off went the tug with the last shovelful of coal in the furnaces, just in time. Then down came the fog, a regular November shroud, so thick that the mainmast was invisible from the poop. Somehow the 'mud'-pilot found us, his boat taking away our deep-water man, in whom—such is the fickleness of mankind—we had now lost all interest. All the next day that thick darkness persisted; but about seven in the evening it lifted a little. The tug was alongside of us directly, so anxious was her skipper to get his cheap job over. We were mighty smart getting under way, being off up the river in less than half an hour from the first glimmer of clear. All went well till we entered Long Reach, when down came the curtain again thicker than ever. The tug turned round and headed down the river, just keeping the paddles moving as we dropped up with the young flood. It was a terribly anxious time. The river was full of craft, and every minute or two there was a tempest of howls as we bumped into some bewildered barge, or came close aboard of a huge ocean steamer. At last the pilot could stand it no longer, and, telling the carpenter to get his maul ready for knocking out the ring-stopper of the anchor, he shouted, 'Stand clear the chain!' At that instant, as if by some pre-arranged signal, the fog rolled up, and in five minutes the sky was as clear as heart could wish. The tug swung round again, and, under a full head of steam, we rushed onwards, entering the Millwall Docks just at the stroke of midnight. The process of mooring in our berth was all a confused jumble of rattling chains, hoarse orders, and breathless, unreasoning activity, succeeded by that sweetest of all sounds to a homeward-bound sailor's ears, 'That'll do, men.'

Uncerthly as the hour was, most of the fellows would go ashore, delivering themselves over to the ever-watchful boarding-house runners like a flock of sheep. But three of us—Oliver, Bill, and myself—rolled once more into our bunks, and, utterly wearied soon fell fast asleep. When we awoke in the morning the new sensation of being our own masters, able to disregard the time, and lay in till noon if we chose, was delightful. But just because we could do as we liked we rose at daylight, had a leisurely wash,

and, dressed in our best, climbed over the rail and sauntered along the gloomy, grimy quays towards the dock-gates. We had just two shillings and sixpence between us, sufficient to get a good meal only, but we knew where we could get more. And that is one of the first pitfalls that beset the path of the homeward-bounder. Many skippers have sufficient thoughtfulness to advance their crews a little money upon arriving in dock, and thereby save them from the dangerous necessity of borrowing from those harpies who abound and batten upon the sailor. Nothing of the kind could be expected from our skipper, of course, so we just had to take our chance. As I was at home and familiar with every corner, I became the guide, and led the way to a snug eating-house in the West India Dock Road, where I knew we could get a civilized breakfast. But Oliver hove-to at the first pub, and swore that what *he* needed was rum. I tried hard to dissuade him, assuring him that he wouldn't be able to eat any breakfast if he got drinking rum first. I might as well have tried to tie an elephant with a rope-yarn. He had his rum: a full quartern of the famous brand that used to be sold about sailor-town, whereof the bouquet was enough to make a horse sick. Then I hurried him off to the coffee-shop, where, with a lordly air, I ordered three haddocks, three hot rolls and butter, and three pints of coffee. Oh, the ecstatic delight of that meal!—that is to us two youngsters. Oliver just pecked a little daintily, and then, turning to a burly carman sitting by his side who had just finished a mighty meal, he said coaxingly, 'I say, shipmate, I ain't touched this grub hardly: can you help me out?' With a commiserating look the carman reached for the food, and concealed it like an expert conjurer.

## 29

*Conclusion*

As I had no home, and cared little where I lodged, I was easily persuaded by Oliver to accompany him to the little beershop in the Highway, where he had put up before. I had my misgivings, for I knew that unsavoury neighbourhood well (it is somewhat different now); but it was necessary to find harbourage somewhere until the ship paid off, which was, as usual, likely to be three days longer. Bill departed unto his own place among the purlieus of Bermondsey, and we two trudged off to Oliver's hotel. After the glowing accounts of it I had received from Oliver, I was dumb-founded to find it a regular den: the bar filled with loafers furtive of look and mangy of clothing, while the big taproom at the back was just a barn of a place open to all. The fat landlord seemed a

decent fellow, but his fatter wife was a terror. She had vigour enough to command a regiment, and woe to the loafer who crossed her. Still I felt that it was now too late to draw back, and besides, I had little to lose; so I had my scanty kit brought up from the ship, and saw it shoved into a corner of the common room, where I reckoned it would be ransacked thoroughly as soon as darkness set in. The landlord lent me a sovereign readily enough, and, as soon as I received it, I bade good-day to Oliver, who was fast drinking himself idiotic, and, taking the train from Shadwell to Fenchurch Street, was whirled out of that detestable locality. All the rest of the day I roamed about the well-known streets, where the very buildings seemed to greet me with the air of old friends. I thoroughly enjoyed myself, and, with only a couple of shillings gone out of my sovereign, returned to my lodging shortly after ten. I found things worse than ever. The landlady was half inclined to abuse me because I hadn't been in to my meals, and every loafer in the place was sponging for a drink. Outside I knew was not healthy at this time of night for me, so I quietly asked permission to go to bed. Grumbling at such an unreasonable request, the landlady snarled, 'You'll 'ave ter wite till yer bed's ready. 'Ow wos hi ter know as you'd want'er sleep all day.' I said nothing, seeing it was the wisest course; but perching myself in a corner under the big flaring kerosene-lamp, tried to read a book I had brought in with me. I had not been thus quietly engaged for more than five minutes, before an awfully repulsive-looking fellow came up to me, and, pushing down my book, said, 'Got enny munny in yer close, young 'un?' I looked at him in silence for a minute, thinking hard how best to answer him. But growing impatient he growled, 'Look 'ere, give us the price of a drink, er I'll bash yer jor in.' That settled it. Indignation overcame prudence, and I shouted at the pitch of my voice, 'Mr. Bailey, do you allow this to go on in your house?' There was an uproar immediately, in the midst of which Mrs. Bailey cleared the room of the swarming loafers—my assailant escaping among them. Then, turning indignantly to me, she abused me roundly for making a disturbance, treating my statement as a 'pack er lies.' I got to bed safely, though, and really the bed was better than I had expected, although the room was just a bare box of a place, with damp-begrimed walls that might have been a coal-cellar.

Rising early in the morning I went down and had an interview with Bailey, in which I asked him to have my dunnage put away, as I was going on a visit and should not return that night. He was pleasant enough about it, and offered me a rum-and-milk at his expense, being greatly amazed at my refusal. Then I escaped and took up my abode at a lodging-house in Newman Street, Oxford

street. The time dragged rather heavily until pay-day, as I dared not do anything costing money; but at last I found myself once more at Green's Home, with my account of wages in my hand, telling me that after all claims were satisfied, I was entitled to sixteen pounds. It was a curious paying-off. Every man, as he got his money, gave the skipper a piece of his mind; and but that a stout grating protected the old man from his crew, I am afraid there would have been assault and battery. I came last, with the exception of Bill, and, when I held out my account of wages to the clerk, the old rascal said, 'I've a good mind to stop yer wages as I promised yer.' What I said doesn't matter, but I never felt the poverty of language more. And when I saw that he had given me on my certificate of discharge an excellent character for conduct (which I didn't deserve) and a bad character for ability (which was utterly unjust), I felt that his malignity would pursue me long after I had seen the last of him. For such a discharge is a millstone round a young man's neck. Captains don't take much notice of a character for conduct—whether it be good or bad—but they do want their men to be of some use at their work, and will return such a discharge as mine was contemptuously. Bill took his pay without looking at it, and, without a word passing between him and the old man, joined me outside. We strolled away together along the East India Dock Road, he bungling over his money all the time, till suddenly he cried, 'Why, I've got a five-pound note too much! Here, come on, let's get out o' this, case he sends after us.' And thus was I avenged. The morality of the thing never troubled me in the least, I only felt glad from my heart that mine enemy would have to refund all that money.

And now I have reached the limit of my book. At the outset I only proposed to deal with the vicissitudes of my life on board ship as a boy. And with the close of this voyage I felt that I was a boy no longer. I was getting more confident in my ability to hold my own in the struggle for life, and, although I saw nothing before me but a dreary round of the drudgery of the merchant seaman's career before the mast, the prospect did not trouble me. I had no plans, no ambitions, nobody to work for, no one to encourage me to strive for better things. I lived only for the day's need, my only trouble the possible difficulty of getting a ship. Of the future, and what it had in store for me, I thought nothing, cared nothing. And yet I was not unhappy. If at times there was a dull sense of want—want of something besides food and clothing—I did not nurse it until it became a pain. Only I kept away from sailor-town. The museums, picture galleries, and theatres kept me fully amused, and, when I was tired, a good book was an unfailing resource against dulness. In fact I lived in a little world of my own, quite

content with my own company and that of the creations of my fancy or the characters in the books I devoured.

This unsatisfactory life, thank God! was soon to be entirely changed; but that, of course, was hidden from me, nor does it come within the scope of this book. As I write these last few words I think curiously whether, if ever they see the light, those who read them will think contemptuously, 'This fellow seems to imagine that the commonplace details in the life of a nobody are worth recording.' Well, I have had my doubts about that all along, and my only excuse must be that I have been assured, upon very high authority, that a book like mine, telling just the naked, unadorned truth about an ordinary boy's ordinary life at sea, could not fail to be of interest as a human document. And, in spite of the manifest shortcomings, the obvious inability to discriminate wisely always between things that are worth the telling and things that are not, I do confidently assert that I have here set forth the truth impartially, as far as I have been able to do so. I feel strongly tempted to draw a few conclusions from my experience; but I must resist the temptation, and allow the readers to do that for themselves. In the hope that some good may be done, some little pleasure given, by this simple recital of a boy's experiences at sea, I now bid my readers, respectfully,

SO LONG!